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Till thou change names, and be where he began."
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FROST AND THAW.

CHAPTER I.

IN RE "ASHTON AND ASHTON VERSUS BLAYDES."

Lowborough Hall is a residence of no great architectural pretensions, and is seated in the midst of no very inviting scenery. The Park is, indeed, extensive and well-wooded, but it lacks alternate elevation and depression; and, so far as the picturesque is concerned, cannot vie with other landed estates whose mansions are less capacious, but in whose demesnes there is a greater diversity of landscape. The

lands in the park and its immediate vicinity are rich, and capable of high cultivation; they disappoint only the eye. Its hundreds of acres lie stretched out in a broad, level flat. There are no gracefully undulating curves in the landscapes, such as Ruskin would speak of as "treasures of natural beauty gathered up in God's hands from one edge to the other, like a woven garment; and shaken into deep falling folds as the robes droop from kings' shoulders." The estate is a valuable one, though the mansion is ugly, low, and damp; the product of an early Georgian era, when Churchwarden-Gothic was introduced into the tottering fabrics of our Norman, Saxon, or Early English churches, and our landed gentry believed in massive square or oblong mansions, as best adapted to replace the ancient or mediæval structures of their ancestors.

Mr. Henry Ashton, to whom the Lowborough Estate had fallen, in due course of

succession, was the second son of its former proprietor, and lineally descended from an Ashton who had been high in favour at the Court of George the First. His elder brother, George, had been in his day a famous traveller. It was the prevailing passion of his life to explore unknown regions. But his name and fame were somewhat clouded over, as a consequence of his social merits being inferior to his deservedly high status as a scientific explorer. He was a man of strongly knitted frame, and had brought his physical powers under perfect training, so as to render them capable of enduring any reasonable amount of hardship or adventure. But he was a man of a singularly self-willed and quarrelsome temperament, and this had brought it to pass that his home-intercourse was far from cordial, or even agreeable. He succeeded in angering his father to such an extent that the two men could not dwell under

the same roof together, and after a while the adventure-loving heir followed the guidance of an inspiration which prompted him to try if he could live more at ease, and establish any more cordial relationship with his kind, in the forest-plains of Patagonia.

In a little while after his arrival there, he contributed to his country's literature an interesting account of his researches in that obscure portion of the globe, and then arrived a report, brought to England by some seamen who had landed there, or carried on seal-fishing along the coasts, that he had proved to be too cantankerous in disposition for even the civilization of the Patagonian giants to put up with, and that they had given him a final *quietus*, and as decent a burial afterwards as they knew how to give him, in some unconsecrated ground or other not known to fame. His father survived his departure five months, and then went the way of all the previous

Ashtons, leaving Lowborough to his younger son Henry.

I had nearly left it on record that these possessions had been enjoyed by Mr. Henry Ashton, during the period of time spoken of, but, had I said so, I should have fallen into an error. Such was not the case, Mr. Ashton was a valetudinarian, and spent so much of his time by the sea, or among the mountains, that Lowborough saw little of him. He was courteous in his manners, and a reasonable landlord, so that his tenantry had little, if any, ground of complaint against him. During the short periods of his stay at Lowborough his disaffection towards the estate increased rather than diminished, and he was slowly making up his mind to sell it, and purchase one more in accordance with his wishes, at the time he was in treaty with Abel Grindstone for the Poplars.

Several weeks had elapsed since the death of the old usurer. The corn was ripening fast,

and a few more suns only were required in order that the scythe and the sickle might begin their work. The will had been read, by virtue of which Francis and Philip Harvey were possessors of one hundred thousand pounds each, in addition to the house property which had yet to be sold, and its proceeds divided between them. The will also required that they should add their uncle's patronymic to their own. Great changes were on the *tapis*—those root and branch changes, that however welcome they may be to the parties most benefitted by them, sadden the mind, as they progress onward, by the association they carry on their very surface, with the death that has taken place in the family. Neither Frank nor Philip intended to have anything to do with farming again. They resolved, each one, upon a separate establishment, in order to the better fulfilment of the duties entailed upon them by the more important social

status to which, by recent circumstances, they had been promoted. But this will appear in the sequel.

It was the breakfast hour at Lowborough, and that repast was on the table, but had not yet been touched. Mr. and Mrs. Ashton were too much pre-occupied with their letters and papers, which had arrived only within the last few minutes, to think of commencing their wonted matutinal attack on the large white eggs, and the round, luscious-looking ham, which had been duly placed upon the table. Two fine boys, and a little girl appeared to be much more ready for the attack, and stood behind their seats looking hungrily at their plates. What to them were the affairs of the world outside—the movements in Church and State, the rising or falling funds, the approaching marriage of one friend, or the threatened death of another? They were too well educated to disport themselves after the noisy fashion of boys

and girls, while their parents were quietly absorbed in reading, but you could see, as they threw significant glances at each other, or wearily looked out of the window on the long stretch of green mossy lawn below them, that Time seemed to them to be more than a little lame of foot just then.

"There's a letter for Emily, my dear; have you seen it?" asked "paterfamilias" from behind his "Times," in a careless, unconcerned tone of voice, as though just then three-fourths of him were in Parliament, and one-fourth only in his family circle. "Do you know the handwriting?"

This last question Mr. Ashton put lazily, as though it were to him a matter of little moment what the answer might be.

Mrs. Ashton took up the letter and glanced at it. She was a tall, handsome woman, and had a way, when excited, of speaking in a tone of voice calculated to startle those in the room with her.

"Know it, my dear! Don't you? Surely you couldn't have looked at the address!"

"I am getting short-sighted, love," said Mr. Ashton, quietly, as he laid down his paper, and adjusted his eye-glass so as to examine the written characters more closely. And he frowned portentously as he did so. Clearly the existence of that letter was an offence to him, and to his wife.

"I thought, papa, you had cashiered that gentleman," remarked the lady.

"I don't quite know what you mean, dear. I, of course, dismissed him in as quiet, gentlemanly a manner as I could from our employ. I didn't absolutely tell him that when he was engaged to teach our boys Latin and Greek he was not expected to lay siege to the heart of our daughter."

"Perhaps, my dear, you were *too* gentlemanly, and too little pointed in the way you spoke to Mr. Blaydes."

"H'm; I don't know. I think he must be deficient in powers of discernment, if he cannot lay its proper meaning and emphasis on the fact that I said his services would no longer be required, on the very day after I met him with Emily in the lane."

"But you said nothing more pointed to him?" replied his wife, looking vexed.

"N—no. I thought I would ignore the affair altogether—so far, at least, as he was concerned. You were with me when I spoke to Emily about him, you know."

"Yes. Then, I suppose, the silly, obstinate child still continues to give him encouragement. He would never have dared to write to her if it were not partly her fault."

"It's a stupid affair. I told her the man has no present property, or future expectations, and that, moreover, I had heard rumours about him—you know—that had by no means increased my confidence in him."

"But she has no faith in rumours to his prejudice. No; he is absolute perfection. Well, my dear, *I* shall put this matter down with a high hand, if you don't. I shall write to the young man myself—at least, if you will not."

"How late Emily is this morning! Come, children, sit you down. We must begin."

And then the attack began in good earnest. But, after sipping his coffee two or three times, Mr. Ashton took up a paper again. This time it was a local journal—the "Lowchester News." His eyes fell upon a paragraph in it that immediately arrested his attention.

"We learn, on good authority, that the late Abel Grindstone, Esq., of Icicle Lodge, near this town, is supposed to have left a fortune behind him, amounting to about three hundred thousand pounds."

"H'm. How impertinent these journalists are! Here's a piece of news, my dear. That

old fellow has left three hundred thousand pounds behind him—though how Mr. Editor should be so wise on the point I cannot understand. It's likely enough to be true, though."

"I suppose the two nephews will have it all, won't they? Mr. Grindstone was hardly likely to trouble any of the public charities with his money."

"Except as a salve to his wounded conscience, perhaps."

"Wounded conscience! And do you really think such old misers have a conscience at all?" said Mrs. Ashton.

"Well, that's better known to the—ahem—lamented deceased than to me, my love. I think I would rather stand in my own shoes, than in his, at the present moment."

"But, Henry, I wish, dear, you would call upon the young men. It might be very advisable, you know, just now. Don't you like Philip Harvey very much?"

"H'm! Well, no; I don't care very much for him. I don't know that there's much harm in him. He hasn't the look of an unsteady man; but I like his brother much better."

"Do you?"

"I do, indeed."

"But he isn't nearly so handsome, nor so fascinating in manner."

"Certainly not, my dear; but I was not thinking of such attractions. I verily believe they're the first things you women do think of. Am I not right now?"

"Then I, at least, am an exception to the rule," returned Mrs. Ashton, evasively and smartly.

"H'm—that's very good. Well, it's 'for better for worse,' you know; and you will at least allow there may be uglier fellows and greater bears than I am."

"Well, perhaps so; but, Henry, promise

me that you really will call on the young men."

"I will, if you wish it."

"When?"

"Oh! on one of these next days. I shall be near their place next week."

"Then do call, dear, before you return, and offer them our united condolences, you know."

"My dear, they'll be able to bear up under their trouble without our sympathy, I think."

"Of course they will; but have your eyes open. Oh! here is Emily."

That young lady was tripping lightly downstairs, when her mother began this last remark. She opened the breakfast room door and entered, glancing first on the breakfast table, and then running to kiss her father and mother.

"Is there no letter for me, papa?"

This question was uttered in a disappointed

tone of voice. The fair speaker—for she was really fair—a tall, graceful, pretty, fawn-like creature of sweet eighteen, had evidently expected to find a communication for her on that breakfast table, and there it was not.

"There is one, Emily," replied her father, coldly, "and you and I must have some talk about it. There it is, on the mantelpiece."

Thereupon this pretty, fawn-like creature of sweet eighteen, blushed angrily, and, I regret to add, shot forth defiant glances from beneath her dark eyelashes at her father, who, however, maintained his ground with the dignity and composure usual with him. Then she proceeded to the mantelpiece, and secured her letter—to read it in delicious retirement.

Meanwhile, her mother watched closely her every movement, and scrutinized narrowly every feature of her face. She watched, but, at first, spoke not. Miss Emily Ashton was just then labouring under an acute attack of

"Love's Young Dream." Her case required at once a tender caution, and the exercise of firm parental authority in its manipulation. She had reached that stage of the complaint, when the slight delirium, common in this malady, leads those who suffer from it to imagine, that they are uncherished and uncared for, save by the one loved object of their thoughts by day, and of their dreams by night. There are but few cases in which the complaint proves fatal, though, as newspaper reports inform us, the threatening symptoms that show themselves during the progress of disease, do sometimes reach that deplorable climax. Mr. Frederick Augustus Blaydes, B.A., of C—— College, Oxford, had been secured by Mr. Ashton, through an educational agent, as the tutor of his two boys.

He was a young gentleman of polished manners, insinuating address, and slightly under twenty-one years of age. His whiskers were bushy, raven black in hue, and

most carefully cultivated. He was not a Hercules in stature, or in physical strength, but was simply an ordinary mortal, not bad looking, and always more or less fashionably attired. Mr. Blaydes had two rooms allotted to him in the house, out of which he occasionally had strolled into the park, when, in the cool of the evening, the leaves stirred softly, as though they were whispering to each other, and the lowering sun threw his bright beams, here and there, over the waving grass, as if it had been a flood of molten gold, poured forth over an emerald floor. Mr. Blaydes had an artist's eye for beautiful combinations in a landscape, and, when occasionally he found himself face to face with the young, graceful, and lively sister of his little pupils, he had a refined way of speaking to her of the scenes around them, and reminding her that Shelley said this, and Moore said that, which gradually led to the young lady breaking through the hard frost

of conventionalism, and chatting with him somewhat more familiarly than she would have done if Mr. Frederick Augustus had not been an University man, and had not reminded her of Apollo's person, and of Apollo's harp, in the matter of his really bewitching whiskers, and of his aptness in amatory quotation.

The love that grew up between Miss Emily, and the tutor, was born in their short summer evening casual meetings in the park, and fed upon their meetings in the square family pew, on Sunday, till, in the lovers' eyes, it had become a paradise; and, in the eyes of Emily's "tyrannical and unnatural" parents, a weed that must be rooted up, and thrown into the cold deeps of Lethe. Mr. and Mrs. Ashton, good people, did not for a while suspect danger, so that by the time the two were met together in the lane by Mr. Ashton, matters had become really serious.

Frederick Augustus had won Emily's love,

and was beginning to think amorously as well of her bank-notes, as of her beauty. So sweetly were the bright green leaves and buds of hope expanding, when an untimely "breeze" went forth, whereby the green leaves were trailed in the dust, and the opening flowers blighted.

It was soon obvious, to both her father and her mother, that after Emily Ashton had scanned her lover's letter, she made a mere feint of taking breakfast. In fact, after a very few minutes spent in pretending to take that meal, she rose, and retired.

"H'm! this case puzzles me not a little, my dear," observed Mr. Ashton, when his daughter had closed the door. "She is self-willed, I see, and that will not do for me. And yet, you know, I should be very sorry to use anything like sternness towards the child. Silly little thing, she is standing sadly in her own light!"

"I think I see a way out of the labyrinth,

if we wait patiently," replied Mrs. Ashton, with a look of quiet amusement.

"You do?"

"Perhaps I ought not to speak so positively as that; but I want you to call upon these young men. I should like her to know more of them—especially of the younger. Very few young girls are more attractive than Emily."

"You would play the manœuvring mother in the case? I object to that sort of thing though; it's playing a dangerous game."

"Not dangerous in the hands of skilful players, my love. The best way to weaken the influence over her of one lover will be to expose her to the superior fascinations of another. What would have become of me, if you had not stepped in, between me, and that dreadful Tom Erskine, of whom you were so terribly jealous?"

"True, my love; that's a case in point! Why, you would have been a widow possibly,

and one in by no means flourishing circumstances."

"My age was very nearly that of Emily, when I began to see that all was not gold that glittered in that case."

"You mean, when you began to find out that poor Tom wouldn't suit you?"

"Yes; Emily's judgment is blinded at present. We will let her see, of course, that this absurd fancy of her's displeases us, and, as soon as possible, bring her and Philip Harvey—or Grindstone I suppose he is now—into acquaintanceship with each other. I augur good from our doing so; I do, indeed. I think Emily would like him."

"Then you wouldn't have me threaten the horsewhip for the gentleman, and confinement in her room under lock and key for the lady, and cut the Gordian knot that way?"

"Oh, dear no! You would elevate both

into martyrs immediately. Let us try another road than that, though it may not be quite so direct."

There the conversation ceased for the time. Mr. Ashton took up his "Times" again, and Mrs. Ashton sipped her coffee, and chatted with her younger children. They had been a few minutes so occupied, when suddenly Mr. Ashton again uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What news, my dear?" asked the wife.

"Listen."

"'To Proprietors of Estates.—A gentleman would be happy to treat, through his solicitor, for the purchase of an estate, containing a mansion and extensive grounds. A property lying within fifty miles of Lowchester would be preferred.—Address, P.H.G., care of Maximilian Badger, Esq., Court Street, Lowchester.'"

"No! You're making it up, you naughty man!"

"Seeing's believing, my dear. Here it is."

"H'm! Oh, Henry! *do* write and offer him Lowborough. It must be sold; it really must. We should all have our health away from this dull, low-lying place. And we might get such a sweet place farther off somewhere!"

"In short, you would have Philip Grindstone come here, and ourselves run away. That's one mode of bringing two young people together, with a view to making them one, that I, for my part, consider rather peculiar; but—"

"Don't you see, my love, the young man will come over and look at the estate. He must be asked to do so, of course. Don't delay a post; write and ask him to stay a little while with us. Really, I think it's quite providential—I do, indeed; don't you?"

"But if the young man comes over, and is

pleased to make Lowborough his own, and falls in love with Emily, and Emily falls in love with him, and all goes well so far, you said just a moment ago that we should all have our health better somewhere else. Perhaps Emily's health, if she ever becomes Mrs. Philip Grindstone, would suffer as much from her living at Lowborough, as you appear to think it does, as long as she is plain Miss Ashton."

For this speech Mr. Ashton received a box on the ear, which he bore with becoming meekness. And by that evening's post he despatched a letter to Philip, stating that Lowborough was in the market, and inviting him to come over and look at it.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER THE PROVING OF THE WILL.

Frank and Philip both lived and flourished on the arrival of the important day, on which the ceremony was gone through, of proving their uncle's will. Anyone attached to and versed in the study of human physiognomy would have found not a little interest, on that day, in reading each of the two young men's characters through the medium of their faces. It was undoubtedly one of undisguised

pleasure for both; but the pleasure was not one and the same in kind.

It so happened that after the usual legal formulæ had been gone through, the two brothers found themselves alone, and agreed to dine together. They had not been very much with each other, since the death by which they had become so much enriched had taken place, and each felt glad of the opportunity of exchanging cordial greetings with the other, on such an occasion as that which had brought them together; especially as—it must be owned—they were unpleasantly conscious of a marked diversity, in tastes and feelings, between them, which threatened each with something like a life-long coolness from the other. The angry retort had been not infrequent with them. They were not fitted for any long-continued social converse with each other, and hence it was wisely ordered that they met but seldom.

It was nearly six o'clock on a dark evening

in December. The pavements under the windows of the room, in the hotel in which they stood awaiting dinner, were sloppy and dirty, on account of the frequent plash, plash of the passengers' feet upon them. They stood near one of the windows, in a room luxuriously furnished, and brightly lit, and in the few quiet moments before dinner, were drawn, by a kind of fascination, to contemplate the contrast between the comfortable room in which they were, and the cold, comfortless streets; between the care-worn look and thread-bare attire of too many of the passers-by, and their own wealthy ease. Philip uttered a remark or two about the ill-clad and neglected pauper children, who shot along hither and thither under the hazy light reflected from the gas-lamps, and the very shrug of his shoulders, as he turned away from the sad sight, and rubbed his hands pleasantly, while he contemplated the pre-

parations for dinner, seemed in itself to speak the words—"H'm, it's all very wretched; but it's no fault of mine. I can't help it!" At the same moment Frank was watching the wan faces, and the tattered garments, and his thoughts were full of schools, and reformatories, of thankfulness for his own happier lot—and of a compassion for the surging sea of human misery without,—the assuaging of which would, as he felt, be worth the expenditure of half his fortune. And thoughts that disturbed his own mind not a little, springing from the remembrance of the manner in which the wealth that had just fallen to him had been amassed, mingled with his other reflections. Was it his at the cost of grinding the faces of the poor? Had his social comfort, and influence, been built upon the ruin, and degradation, and despair of any of the miserable beings who were plodding on wearily along the streets outside that splendid hotel?

Was not that wealth a power in his hands, to do something for the alleviation of human misery, commensurate with the great income entrusted to him ?

Dinner over, the brothers drew nearer to the fire to finish their wine, and chat the more cosily. Philip placed the decanters and glasses in a conveniently close proximity to them, and then produced from his side pocket a pile of letters.

" Here's a curiosity, Frank," said he, as he held the heap up before his brother, between his thumb and fingers.

" What d'ye mean ? What are they ?"

" Begging letters, every one. By-the-bye, you must have had a few also. Have you burned them ?"

" No, not all."

" Have you answered any of them ?"

" Yes, a few."

" But what's the use ? I shall set my face

resolutely against the whole system. Lord bless you, you don't know how you get imposed upon."

"It's only civil to answer your correspondents. You can do so in a word or two in many cases."

"Well, it's too early for me to begin to reply to them as they wish, yet. I am to give seventy thousand for that estate you know."

"Lowborough?"

"Yes. It's all settled."

"So I heard. And I was thinking you might not have been quite wise. I don't think the property's worth so much."

"Why not?"

"Because you can't be sure about the title."

"Title! What d'ye mean? The property's signed over to me by Ashton himself."

"What Ashton? D'ye mean the one who has been travelling in Patagonia?"

"*That man!* By Jove, Frank, you must be losing your wits! He's been dead and buried this half-dozen years, or so."

"This is proved, is it?"

"Of course it is. Those Patagonian fellows aint quite up to keeping church registers, but —oh you know the whole story—it's as plain as daylight, that the man died under the blows they gave him. Badger's satisfied with the validity of the title."

"Of course he must be. Oh, it *may* be all right, I dare say. I *hope* it will be."

"Do you think I should have been such a fool, Frank, as to have spent a shilling on the purchase of the property, if the title had been in any way defective?"

"H'm, no; of course not."

"Then you'll give up the peculiar idea that there's a danger of the dead man coming back again, to disturb me in my possession of it?"

"However peculiar ideas may be, they

have a trick of clinging to you sometimes, in a haunting sort of way."

"Pooh! Pass the bottle, there's a good fellow. I say, Frank, old boy, this life's very jolly after all, isn't it?"

"One has much in it to be thankful for, if you mean that."

"Of course I do. I think to be rich is about the jolliest of all blessings."

"It's not impossible that it might be a tremendous curse. Money can be abused."

"What a fellow you are. I believe, unless you get a wife to look after you directly, you'll be for scrambling it along the streets, by-and-bye. I never knew a fellow who seemed to care so little about it."

"No, you're wrong there, Philip."

"Why, you said you'd answered all those letters."

"No, not all."

"Some of them, then; and I dare say

there's a cheque in each of your replies. I know there is."

"Then you *know* what is not the case. I don't quite believe in flinging money away after such a fashion as that. Money was not given one to be wasted, but to do good with."

"H'm! I don't think your notions and mine on that point would square together at all. Of course I know well enough that my uncle's life was a great mistake. I have an unmitigated contempt—I can't help saying so—for the man who lives in the way he lived. You could tell by his pinched-up face, and hungry looks, that he half starved himself. And what on earth was the use of his money to him? If he had bought a good estate, and kept his horses and carriages, and had his house full of a jolly sort of people, and taken up his proper position in the county with it, and had now and then opened his heart to give a guinea or a five-pound note to a charity,

he would have been better thought of when he died. But as for a man giving away his money in pailfuls to anybody who can pull a long face, or draw up a pitiful tale on paper, —I don't believe in that either, do you?"

"Money in pailfuls! A man must be rich indeed who can do that. But I have reasons of my own for thinking that a man had better do even that, in systematic benevolence, than spend pailfuls on himself. Now I don't want to quarrel with you, but how many pailfuls have you spent on yourself, in the matter of that estate? You'll have your horses and your carriages, and your wines, and an expensive wife, and a swarm of summer friends and toadies; and you'll very likely become a great man in the county, and be thought of as an immensely fine fellow; but, you know, you'll die after all."

"Die! Well, yes, I suppose one will some time or other. But it's not the time to talk

about dying, just when you've fallen into a good thing, in the shape of a large fortune, is it?"

"My belief is this—that the only way to save yourself from being the worse for your fortune, the only way to prevent its being a heavy weight about your neck, to drag you down, and down, and down, is to determine so to spend it as you will wish you had done, when you come to die."

"That's all well enough, but I suppose you don't mean to say that a man's a great sinner who, because he happens to be tolerably rich, spends a few hundreds a year in wines, that he may not be thought shabby, and holds up his head a bit, and lives up to his income. I suppose people mostly do this under such circumstances, and I can't see the harm of it. They can give, if they like, a guinea a year each to this charity and that."

"Exactly! where they *ought* to give fifties and hundreds."

"That's what I call flinging money away with a vengeance! You might, just as well, go out into the street, with a pailful of sovereigns, and call for a lot of young urchins to scramble for it, or pitch your roll of notes into the fire, to see how prettily they burn."

"Then I should be justly voted a lunatic, Philip. But—for it's of no use our blinking the question—you and I both know who gave us our money."

"Very well."

"And the question is this—what was it given to us for?"

"To keep up a certain position with, of course."

"No."

"Why, Frank, what on earth d'ye mean?"

"What I was about to say. The money you and I have is not our own."

"Worse and worse! What d'ye mean by that?"

"Strictly and literally what I say. It is

God's money—to be plain-spoken with you—and we are answerable for the way in which we spend it."

"Of course we are; that's what the parsons are for ever dinning into our ears."

"And they're right to do it. I wish they did so more to our faces, and more plainly. Somehow or other, what they speak from the pulpit has too loose a hold upon their hearers on that point. It's so conveniently forgotten when one's out o' doors again."

"Well, it's a nuisance to be for ever bored by charity sermons."

"That's just what our self-love would have us say. Self delights in its pailfuls of sovereigns, and even when the pail brims over, it had rather get another vessel to receive the sovereigns, that have fallen to the ground, than have them gathered up for the service of their Giver."

"You are talking fine romantic stuff to-night."

"Fifty thousand rich men at your back would say the same," replied Frank, with rising choler, "but legion as their name might be, I would face them all, as I will face you out, with one or two plain questions. Do the Parables talk fine romantic stuff?"

"The Parables! I didn't know they talked at all."

"Yes they do, with a voice heard in the inner ear, that is God's Voice, and you know, as well as I do, that those Parables teach us plainly that we are only stewards, answerable to God for the way in which we spend our means. Every sovereign is a talent committed to our charge, and when the Voice cries to you and to me, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward,' it will be an awkward moment for us if we are conscious at the time that our talents have been spent on houses, and lands, and viands, and wines, and not on better things."

"But is one to do nothing in this life till one has found a text to prove it by."

"I don't quite admire the way in which you put your question. I don't like the sneering tone in which you speak; but I say this, that there's a difference, wide as the poles asunder, between the Mammon of unrighteousness and the True Riches."

"Is there? Well, it's very kind of you to tell me so, but d'ye know, for the life of me I can't make out what 'the Mammon of unrighteousness' means."

"There was a time when I couldn't have told you myself what it means, but I took the trouble to find out. And I can tell you this, that you and I now have golden, glittering heaps of this Mammon of unrighteousness. And we may have those heaps of gold in the Bank, and in our thoughts, and be glad to ask for the drop of water at last to cool our tongue with if we slight the meaning of that

phrase. You have just been talking about your estate, and your friends, and so forth. Rather 'make to yourself friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' "

"You deal in enigmas to-night. Now enlighten me a little, and give me the solution of your riddle."

"Look out through the window for it, or, for the moment, solve it for yourself in the light of actual experience, such as you may gain by studying the lives and sufferings of your fellow creatures a little. Take your Mammon of unrighteousness in your hand, and relieve the wretched—not with a paltry mite, now and then, which, compared with your fortune, is but as a drop in the sea, but with sufficient to make the widows' and orphans' faces look bright with joy. One day you will be thankful, in such a case, that

you thought more of them than of yourself, and when flesh and heart fail, and houses and lands are of no more use to you, then those whom you have made your friends by ministering to them in sickness and in suffering, will receive you into everlasting habitations."

"Why, Frank, I never heard a man talk as you do, who has just dropped in for a fortune."

"It is one thing to talk, and another to act. I have been disgusted enough, God knows, in my poorer days, with the meanness, and selfishness, and greediness of the rich. I have been disgusted with their guineas and half-guineas, and half-crowns which they have paid into God's Treasury, for a salve to their consciences, after they have spent thousands upon the service of self. When I saw this I *abhorred* money. I looked upon it as the invention of Satan. I regarded it as a curse, and not a blessing. My ideas are changed

now. I am in danger myself of doing the very same things I once abhorred; and if I preach one thing, and do another, I shall be such a cast-away—and even you may bring this night as a witness against me to prove it—as millions of money will not console me for. I can tell you *now* that I tremble for myself. I can feel within me a kind of pleasure in the contemplation of my gold. I should not be a man if I did not. But I tell you, too, that I had rather fling it into the bottom of the sea; I had rather it had never been, than that this accursed love of it should grow upon me. Once I had no patience at the sight of a bank in one street, a workhouse in another, a prison in a third street, an asylum in a fourth, and throngs of wretched creatures half starved, walking by the bank, and looking up hungrily at its thick walls. I say I once hated such a building, and could almost wish I did so now, but

that, God helping me, that receptacle of wealth shall keep but a small moiety, *for my own use*, of the substance that has fallen to my share. Nor will I enjoy it in shutting my door, and in counting it over with glistening eyes. No; I will give it away *largely*, in the hope that it may do the work it was made to do, and that some part of this wretched world—however small—may be the better for its being done."

"Well, you know, all this sounds to me very odd."

"No doubt. And you will take your own way with your money, and I, of course, have no right to interfere with you. You will be one of those who, if I had spoken a thousand times more plainly, and more convincingly, would yet act, in spite of it, as though you thought it no sin to spend your thousands on estates, and wines, and luxuries, while others —multitudes of them—are without shelter,

and without bread, and without hope, and God in the world; but, if you do this, look to it Philip—look to it, man,—that the faces of your poor neighbours do not haunt you, for ever and ever, when your gold has become dust, and your bank-notes are useless as waste paper. I'll tell you this. I have a mission to accomplish. I have to fight against the love of gold in myself, and in others —tooth and nail—and to show its true use: and it shall be no fault of mine, if the rich perish, in spite of me, and my words, in their case, though borne witness to by saints and angels, and men, are so far wasted."

"Well, Frank; you've had *your* say, and now I'll have mine. I may be very crooked and perverse in my ways; but as I don't admire being stormed at, so I think you'll find your mission, as you call it, won't answer *with me*. You might *persuade* perhaps, where you will never *force* men into your

way of thinking. You're a perfect storm wind."

"You own to the truth of what I say?"

"No, I don't."

"Then you don't believe in the Bible?"

"Yes, I do; but the Bible says nothing against putting your money into banks, and buying estates, and laying up for your heirs."

"Does the Bible commend selfishness and self-indulgence, to the neglect of the poor?"

"No."

"Does the Bible commend Dives for 'faring sumptuously every day,' and sending out to Lazarus the bare crumbs, when he ought to have denied himself, for that poor man's sake?"

Philip Harvey Grindstone was silent.

"I dare say my way of putting things may be offensive. I wish it were not so; but truth is truth, even though it may not be administered in a palatable form. I don't

know that it would serve you very much at the last day if you were to say—" I would have listened to my brother, but he didn't give me his pill in a coating of sugar."

Then a silence fell upon the young men, and they separated for the night.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH FRANK ACHIEVES A GREAT VICTORY, AND DOES A GREAT GOOD.

Icicle Lodge, like the rest of the property that had formerly been possessed by the late Abel Grindstone, had been offered for sale, but it appeared as though no one had cared to become the purchaser of it. The place had an evil reputation. People passed it by with a shudder, as they thought of him to whom it had once belonged—with a shudder such as

would have thrilled through them if they had seen the old usurer approaching towards them out of the rooms, he had darkened by his shadow but a little while before,—the rooms in which he had gloated over the hoards of gold that had cost him his soul, the chamber in which he had slept, for years, the broken and troubled sleep of the unjust.

Frank himself had no love for the place, but he resolved to remain in it a little while longer, till the furniture should have been advertised for sale. He lingered on beneath its roof, and matured his plans there as to the future, while Philip was entering upon Lowborough, adorning its large rooms with choice paintings, and costly furniture, storing in his cellars wines of first-rate reputation among connoisseurs, and preparing to take up a position in the county, befitting the wealth of his resources. And in one room of that dreary house, with its low ceilings, and its ill-lighted apartments, Frank fought and won in

such a battle as God and the angels, good and evil, alone took note of,—a battle out of which he issued, with such glory in their eyes, as the hero of a hundred fights never had.

Into that battle he entered not without the preparation of years. He knew that it would come upon him, after the old usurer should have been laid low. While he lived, he rigidly restrained his nephew's powers of expenditure within strait limits, and those were the days in which he drew up his forces, in readiness for the fierce trial that was yet to come, when, with his uncle's ill-gotten wealth in his own coffers, he would have to make a stand against the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to wrestle with temptation from within and without;—into which his brother fell, with his eyes wide open, causing thereby an exultation to the powers of darkness, not heard by him within the walls of Lowborough, or in its shady groves, but none the less real because he knew not of it.

Mr. Badger had been with him that morning on matters of business. He had learned that his wealth exceeded the amount of which he had expected to become master. The late usurer's estates, and his live and dead stock had sold better than anyone could have anticipated. Fortune had bestowed upon him her richest favours; and synchronically with the information Mr. Badger brought him, that gentleman had also spoken to him of a choice property in Somersetshire—a property far exceeding in the picturesque beauty of its landscape the Lowborough estate, which he had been instructed to dispose of on most advantageous terms, on account of certain difficulties having befallen its owner. Mr. Badger had represented to him that such an offer was singularly well timed. He had ventured to say that he well knew, it could not be pleasant to his client's feelings, to remain for life in a neighbourhood in which the memory of the man, by whose death he

profited so largely, was held in such disrespect. And he had left with him a lithographed view of this estate in the south, that lay far away from the scene of his late uncle's greedy and miserly practices. The mansion was one of noble proportions, and modern in its architecture, standing forth prominently to view on the hill-side, from the midst of its belt of woods. A silvery trout stream meandered through the grounds, spanned here and there by artistic rustic bridges, and, on either side, a lofty hill formed a boundary to the engraving. The mansion, and the park surrounding it, stood on ground gradually ascending, between the two hills. Behind it, a line of granite cliffs bounded the view, at whose base ran the river, whence a watery branchlet diverged into the park, and in front, the landscape stretched away over miles of country scenery. An intoxication seized him, as he laid this fair picture before him on the table,

(in the very room in which his uncle had spent so many hours daily, in the greedy contemplation of his treasures), and dwelt longingly upon it. By the mere stroke of his pen he could make that fair property his own. He could make up his mind to quit that dingy house, haunted by memories from which his soul recoiled in disgust, and set forth to view it. And he could see no reason why a censorious whisper should be breathed against him if he did so. The wealth left him was strictly and legally his own, and he had broken no hearts in order to obtain it. Gladly would he have taken up the peaceful avocations of a country gentleman, and have saddled himself with the responsibilities attached to the ownership of the fair estate on which he was feasting his eyes; but, only a few hours before, he had censured his brother Philip, for having given himself up to the selfish enjoyment of a property equally important; and was it to be

thought of, that after he had spoken, so plainly, his own views as to the moral responsibility entailed upon them, as the possessors of so much of this world's good, he should fall into the same snare, content himself with an earthly paradise, and close his heart and his ears against the miseries, which, in former days, it had been the chief ambition of his life to relieve? The tempter was at his ear, as he still lingered upon the contemplation of that Somersetshire estate,—as he still doubted within himself, what course he should take in the matter, and he heard within the baneful suggestion—"Thou hast much good laid up for many years; take thy fill, eat, drink, and be merry." But could he not take upon himself the ownership of that fair property, and still live for God? He had once decided that if he should ever become possessed of large means, he would largely control his own expenditure, in order that their beneficial effects might be felt over a larger surface. Should

he now narrow the circle within which his intended benevolence should play its part, and live up to his means—far more for himself than for others? If he became a country gentleman in Somersetshire, and lived as his fashionable neighbours, and summer friends would of course expect him to live, he could take care to provide liberally for all local claims upon him, and devote, besides that, a certain limited portion of his means to purposes of general good. But could he bear the thought of retreat from the scheme of his earlier days? Once he had wondered how it could be, that with multitudes, to be rich is to be mean, and narrow, and degradingly selfish; and he had declared that if ever wealth were his, it should never deprive him of his heart. He remembered that the moments in which he had uttered those words were very solemn ones. Could it be that he should now wrest himself away from their moral grasp of him? Should he too

become, like so many of the rich, a man of hardening heart, and exclude from his sympathies altogether the persons he had felt, in the solemn moments referred to, that it would be a luxury worth all the accumulated luxuries of this world, to care for? Or should he rise up like a man, and be faithful to his old convictions, and now that the force of temptation was upon him like an armed giant, betake himself to One Mightier than the strong foe who was threatening to alter his views, to change, for the worse, the whole tenor of his life, and to make him grossly unfaithful to an earlier ideal of true happiness which his good angel still suggested to him was the true one? It was a hard struggle, but it ended, as became the man who had such memories to guide him.

For a moment he gathered himself up—not in his own strength—for the mighty effort: and then he threw the fair lithograph

into the blazing fire, by which it was quickly consumed, and determined to carry out his old ideal, in the service of Him who had willed that he should be rich, and should have a heart in his body as well.

He had just reached this climax when Rachel Skinner entered with the intelligence that the vicar of St. Mark's had called, and wished to see him.

Mr. Nichols always, in late years, had the look of a man who had never taken kindly to life. He had struggled, for a long time, against two enemies by whom he had been relentlessly persecuted—chronic ill-health and poverty. He bore deep traces of the struggle on his thin, wan face, furrowed brow, and prematurely grey hair. Though the father of a numerous family, of whom ten still survived, he was not more than fifty years of age; but time had played at ball with, and maltreated him, and many would have taken

him to be, at least, ten years older. As he moved forward slowly, and with a marked hesitation, to take Frank's proffered hand, his countenance plainly proved that he had come upon no pleasant errand. But, despite all his timidity of manner, he looked up into your face with the eyes of an honest man, and had the address and bearing of a gentleman. Kindly hearts, in high and low, felt his influence on this account, though it was exercised over them, from beneath a shadow that clung fast to him whithersoever he went. Not being a perfect man by any means, there were times when the persistent presence with him of this shadow, was too much for his limited stock of Christianity to bear.

Wherever he was, whithersoever he went, his footsteps were dogged by a persecuting worry. If his brain had been in any degree diseased, he might have fancied that this persistent worry of his had visible shape. Cer-

tain it is, that, minister of Grace as he was, he fretted and chafed against it not a little, for the days on which the sun shone upon his path, were few and short, and far between; and he was only human. If you can imagine a man followed up closely, when he would fain be at ease and quiet, by a bodiless, ugly phantom, resembling an ill-favoured cur, always biting at his legs, incommoding his onward progress, snarling and springing at him, when he would fain dwell upon his parish, and its unceasing claims upon his watchfulness; the said phantom leaving him for only too brief a space, and then suddenly springing into his path again, and pestering him as before, you may then have before you Mr. Nichols of St. Mark's, and his life-long worry. If it had been a creature of life, the vigorous, stormy way, in which the vicar dealt with it, would have relieved him of its persistent attentions years ago; but this it had not. He was a haunted man, and he looked on the

world coldly and proudly, because there was a lack of sympathy for him, which, with his own heart warm towards all who were in any kind of sickness or adversity, he could not understand, and secretly resented. This was the gentleman whom Frank received kindly, and bade be seated.

"It's a cold morning, Mr. Nichols. You've brought the frost in with you. Come, draw up to the fire."

"I think, Mr. Grindstone, I seldom leave the frost behind me, and there's always something about my life that makes me feel it is a long series of knots which one cannot untie. I cannot make out why it should be my destiny to be so perpetually miserable myself, and to bring the infection of my misery on others."

"Sit down, and tell me quietly what's the matter," said Frank, cordially, and at the same time very gently.

"I am suffering because I cannot work out an insoluble problem."

"Well, take heart, sir, and think how many are in a like position."

"But from time to time I feel as though I must have it solved, if not by myself, then by someone whom I can trust. I can trust you, and I ask you how I can provide for the wants of my family with a hundred and twenty pounds a year, and not incur debt and harass?"

"I cannot undertake to grapple with your difficulty, sir. You *cannot* do what you propose."

"But the Church would have me do it, and there are those living at no great distance off who account it a sin that I cannot do it. Will you bear me witness that I have done my best?"

"Readily I will."

"Then do you think it is fair, do you think

it is likely to be a source of strength to me, do you think it is likely to make me earnest in my work, or lax in its discharge, do you think it is likely to improve my already sinking health, that at this moment, when I have sick to visit, and the suffering to console, and my sermons to write, I should have—I speak to you as one Christian brother to another—an execution in my house ?"

"An execution !"

"Yes. The explanation of it is very simple. A man cannot do impossibilities. I have one hundred and twenty pounds a year, and ten children dependent upon me. Occasionally the Bishop, who I know feels for me, has helped me ; and occasionally—but I will not weary you or waste your time. What must I do ?"

"Have you sought help from any one ?"

"I did so some little while ago. I forced my proud and sensitive spirit to address a

letter to one who has a high reputation as a Christian in the town—"

"Yes?"

"And he has not yet replied to my letter. I then wrote to another, and he did reply in cold, stern terms. I will mention no names, but both of them acted, as, forgive me, I feel I could never have acted myself. I wrote to them that this execution might be averted. I have failed in so doing. Was it wrong in me to seek their help under the circumstances?"

"Wrong! No. By whom was the writ served?"

"By Badger. He is a cold, unfeeling fellow. He is a man who preys upon the miseries of his kind; he—"

"Never mind, my dear sir. Keep calm. Your house shall be free on your return home. You say the small tithes of St. Mark's return you only one hundred and twenty pounds a year?"

"Yes; that is the average sum."

"And the great tithes, over which I myself have control, are, I think, about seven hundred and seventy-five a year?"

"They are so."

"Which of course my uncle pocketed, and did nothing for. Those great tithes shall be restored to the Church, Mr. Nichols, without delay. It is one of the crying iniquities of the last days, because of which 'the love of many should wax cold,' that the laity should still be suffered, by a law that has no Divine stamp upon it, to retain in their hands property, of which, centuries ago, the Church was despoiled. Think you that a law which virtually looks upon so manifest a spoliation, as a thing rendered venerable and respectable, on account of the length of time during which it has been allowed to remain, is one that commends itself to Divine justice? The great tithes of St. Mark's are yours, my friend. If you are going into town, send Badger to me, and he

shall make them yours, and if you will wait a moment I will give you their amount for the first year in advance."

There are certain emotions that come over one, when placed, unexpectedly, in any critical situation, in this eventful life of ours, which it is not easy to embody or describe in words. My pen is utterly unequal to the description of those, by which the mind of Mr. Nichols was agitated at this moment. Not a few years had he traversed the highways and bye-ways of life, and he had met with many in them, who, in moral dignity and nobility, towered high above their fellows—men who kept a loose hold upon their possessions, and delighted in relieving sorrow, and hardship with them—men towards whom his whole nature warmed with a rich glow of feeling, and whom he loved and revered at first sight. But, at this moment, Mr. Nichols felt he had met with a man, the like of whom he had never met with before—a man both rich, and

richly generous,—one who could be charitable with no narrowly measured dole, or after the world's conventional manner, while the love of money still lies close to the heart, and holds mastery over all the actions. But as the Vicar of St. Mark's was one who cared little for money, except for the relief of present necessity, and in so far as it would enable him to pay to all men their just and lawful due, so he would not think of accepting the extension to him of so surpassingly great a liberality ; but his whole soul was a-glow with gratitude, as he felt that, at last, after many a weary year's search, he had met with a fellow-creature, who esteemed it a luxury to do good, and who made his money, even to profuseness, subserve his desire to enjoy that luxury to the full.

"Stay, my kind friend," he said, as he saw that Frank had his hand upon his cheque-book, "I cannot think of your robbing yourself in this way. Tell me you will lend me a

sufficient sum to relieve me of my present embarrassment, and that you will give me a few months, in order that I may repay your generous loan in full."

Here he stopped, for Frank had opened his cheque-book, and was rapidly filling in one of its leaves with a determination, whose mute expression was—"I have said what I will do, and I will not break my word." But when a moment afterwards he placed in Mr. Nichols' hands a cheque for £775, he proved that he had not been inattentive to his clerical friend's very natural scruples.

"I am not acting impulsively, Mr. Nichols. I am acting from a conviction that I am unjustly possessed of these tithes—from a moral persuasion, that, as their alienation from St. Mark's was spoliation when it took place, it is equally a spoliation to retain them, and I am sure that He, who has seen me sign this cheque, is satisfied with what I have done. If you or I were conscious that we had in our possession,

at this moment, money or lands, which had been handed down to us, from ancestors who had gained possession of them, in the first instance, by means of highway robbery; and if you or I knew well that, somewhere in our immediate neighbourhood, there were living in abject poverty the lineal descendants of that victim of our ancestors' rough usage, think you that God would regard with indifference our retention of such unjust gains, though fifty human laws should sanction our doing so? The case is a darker one when it was the Church that was robbed. No, I have strong feelings on that point; I could not rest upon my bed, with the consciousness that my agent was collecting that money for me, year by year. It is yours; it could never have been mine; it is yours as a matter of debt, it should have been yours for years past. You know me too well to imagine, after what I have said, that I could be comfortable in taking back that cheque. I will, if you wish

it, hand it in to you, through the Bishop's hands, and, if you will permit me, I will go home with you now, and make all things straight for you there. Would you prefer that I should do this?"

"This only, and nothing more; I cannot think of anything more. I cannot touch that cheque."

"Then it shall reach you in a more indirect way. But come, we'll face this Philistine!"

"No very civil one, and one thin, and small of stature to boot!"

"H'm! Well, you know they say we are a degenerate race, and that our fathers were equal, each man, to one and a half such as we are. Are you ready?"

"Quite; and many, many thanks."

And then the two sallied forth arm in arm. And on the way the Vicar met one who had morally thrust him back, when he asked help of him, that he might avert undeserved trouble

from his home. And this *rencontre* reminded Mr. Nichols that Divine Providence works oftentimes in a circuitous way; and, in the force of that persuasion, he repented of many an act of distrust and rebellion, when he had been in trouble before, and when it had seemed to him, that both God and man had deserted him.

And so it came to pass that there was joy under the Vicar's care-visited roof that night, and devout thankfulness, that earth was still sufficiently like Heaven, to retain, on its surface, a man so noble in nature, so acutely sensitive, in the matter of right and wrong, and so resolute in carrying out his convictions, as was Francis Harvey Grindstone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SKELETON AT WIMPERLEY GRANGE, AND A LOVE-STORY ABOUT A BULL AND A THUNDER-STORM.

It has been hinted in a former part of this history, that there was a skeleton in the otherwise pleasant household at Wimperley Grange. There is one in most families. Where can there exist, on this trouble-haunted earth, domestic happiness, without some let or hindrance to it, smaller or greater in magnitude?

In all of them there is a care, more or less prominent, known very often only to those with whom the members of the domestic circle are on terms of most familiar friendship—a care that intrudes itself between the sunshine of two or more hearts, like the dull, cold misery-distilling rains of a disappointing June. When this said skeleton is abroad in the house, everything in it is "out of tune and harsh." For the while, "each hermit-spirit dwells apart." The cruel skeleton has set up icy barriers between heart and heart, and those who love most, and are least able to endure its wilful, wanton moods, must bear their heart-ache in patience, till the sunshine of love breaks through again, and the walls of ice melt, or the comfortless rains have again ceased to fall.

It has been said that Mrs. Cameron was a very pretty little woman, and that, moreover, she was one of Marion Wilmot's best friends. It has also been said, that she was apt to take

offence quickly, as is the case with most impulsively generous, and affectionate natures. It will, from this, be evident that Mrs. Cameron would be likely to have her reasonable, and unreasonable moods, and sometimes, when these latter held her captive, those who knew her best, marvelled greatly at the change, that had come over her. For the time, her very identity seemed to have gone. She was another being, in the eyes of those who had the misfortune to cross her path.

Priscilla Cameron, it will be remembered, was a few months older than her friend Marion, and, therefore, most certainly, of marriageable age. Although Priscy was by no means plain, her mother was conscious, that her personal charms were inferior to her own, when at the same age. And Mr. Cameron, being a loving and indulgent husband, who had not quite forgotten his Latin, and had the weakness to quote fragments of it, from time to time, as occasion offered, had

taken his wife in his arms, when some experience or other had made her look particularly bright and happy, and had also, with a pardonable weakness, informed her that she was better looking than her daughter—that it was a case of "*O matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior*" reversed. Now, Mrs. Cameron liked this homage to the memory of her maidenly, and the present ripeness of her matronly charms, though we may be sure that she loved her daughter none the less, for her own gratifying consciousness of superiority, and her husband a little the more for his kindly confirmation of it. Such things have to be jotted down, from time to time, in the history of human nature. But though Mrs. Cameron had borne, with much philosophy, the sight of her first grey hair, howbeit she knew that—

> "One by one, those mute mementoes would increase,
> And steal youth, beauty, strength away, till life itself should cease,"

—she was not at all times quite so complacent, when other grey hairs arrived upon the scene,

and when, in addition to this, she found herself continually under the same roof, with a tall, beautiful girl in the prime of life, who was the observed of all observers, as she glided gracefully along the ball-room, in her simple robes of snow-white muslin. In one of her reasonable moods, Mrs. Cameron had warmly seconded her husband's invitation to Marion, to spend a few months at the Grange, till Priscilla should be married, and, probably, she alone in that house, could see or pretend to see any ground for regret, that this invitation had been given and accepted. But Mrs. Cameron's knowledge, and experience of life, had led her to feel that men—even married men sometimes—are very susceptible to the influence over them of young and lovely women, with whom they are constantly associating, on a footing of friendly intimacy. And, by degrees, after the first novelty of Marion's stay beneath their roof had worn away, the mistress of Wimperley Grange found herself

watching her guest's movements, and those of her husband. Mr. Cameron was chivalrous in his attentions to the fair sex, led so to be by the natural kindliness of his heart, and Marion, young, and an orphan, felt herself at perfect liberty to receive these chivalrous attentions, and even to invite them, in the presence of others, as a daughter would feel herself free to lean upon and appeal to a father. But Mrs. Cameron's grey hairs began to come faster, and, with their advent, a silly feeling of jealousy awoke within her breast, as she beheld one, lovelier than herself, so much with the man she loved above all others, and one to whom his courtesies were evidently so welcome.

There had been a ball at the Grange, at which Marion Wilmot had been present, and, in the course of the evening, an unpleasant dizziness and faintness had come over her, occasioned by the heat of the room, the brilliancy of the lamps, the mazy windings to and

fro of the many guests who were assembled on the occasion—by the *toute ensemble*, indeed, of influences common to such festive scenes. The reader well knows already, that, occasionally, she suffered from severe head-aches, and, on that account, he will not wonder, when told that the discomfort referred to had overcome her, while engaged in dancing. Mr. Cameron had early perceived it, and was ready with his strong, manly arm to proceed to the rescue, so that, as the result proved, she was little the worse for the mishap. He had led, or rather supported her away, into a cooler room, whither he had not forgotten to beckon Priscilla also, and, with Priscilla, he had remained watching Marion, as she half-reclined upon a couch, till she revived a little. This scene had been watched by Mrs. Cameron, who had followed to the door, and then—somewhat strangely as all these felt—retired, without a word of sympathy or enquiry. When, after a little while, Marion appeared

in the ball-room again, leaning on Mr. Cameron's arm, and the two walked up to Mrs. Cameron, she spoke quickly and coldly to them, and heartily they wished the guests gone, that they might the sooner arrive at the cause of the lady's presumed displeasure. But that night Marion's curiosity was not gratified, for as soon as she could do so without the look of being rude or inhospitable, the hostess betook herself to her chamber.

In order that the reader may know more of the said pettish little hostess's mind, as to what had taken place on the preceding evening, the writer must take the liberty of asking him to follow to a very sacred apartment, in which, at a late hour, on the following day, Mrs. Cameron was sitting before her mirror, deeply engaged in the mysteries of her toilet, under the burden of which she supported herself, by occasional sips from a cup of coffee placed conveniently near her, Priscilla and her

maid being both in attendance. If any gentle reader, of the fair sex, should feel an angry rising in her throat, because of the writer's obtrusiveness on a scene so forbidden to the eyes of the male species of the *genus homo*, she may possibly be a little reasonable, when she learns that he shelters himself, in this matter, behind the broad shield of a late great master of fiction. "Chroniclers," wrote the author of "Barnaby Rudge," "are privileged to enter where they list, to come and go through key-holes, to ride upon the wind, to overcome, in their soarings up and down, all obstacles of distance, time, and place." Such a shield as this is of use, when fair ladies would grow censorious.

On the morning in question, Priscilla received an early visit from Mrs. Cameron's maid, who knocked at her chamber door, and, upon being admitted, confided to her young lady her fears, that "something was wrong altogether

with her mistress; that she was going on so, that she was sure she couldn't be quite right in her head." Thereupon Priscilla made a hasty toilet, and repaired to her mother's room. The first glimpse at the maternal face shewed her, that there had been an angry, tearful storm within. There was a look as of despair there, which gave Priscilla a touch of the heart-ache at once. Mrs. Cameron, when her daughter entered, had, for a time, suspended the operations of her toilet, and was sitting still in front of the mirror, but with her eyes fixed down upon the floor. There was a fire in the grate, but, at present, it had not warmed the room sufficiently, to expel from it the piercing cold of a severe winter morning, and there was a pallor on Mrs. Cameron's cheeks, which seemed to prove that the cold air of the room had chilled her through and through.

"Mamma, what are you doing there?

You should not have risen till the fire burned up a little. Don't you feel how cold it is?"

Mrs. Cameron turned towards the speaker, with a look on her face, very like that on the countenance of a tragedy actress—a look that spoke plainly of her being, just then, on the bleak moorland of misery.

"Cold, child? Yes, I do feel it's cold—very cold. To think that for twenty-five years I should have been your father's wife, and that, during all that time, he should never have had cause to blush on my account, and now he is to slight me, when I'm beginning to go down hill. Yes, it's cold enough—cold as the grave."

"Oh, hush, mamma! You wrong papa—you cruelly wrong him; you know, as well as I do, that you've no cause to think one unkind thought of him. I can't have him blamed, while I am by, for he doesn't deserve it."

"You can leave me, Priscilla, as soon as

you like. I didn't ask you to come to me, I believe," returned Mrs. Cameron.

"No; but you must not be unreasonable, mamma. I came in because I heard from Mary you were not well this morning, and because I think you have been saying things, which you might see cause to regret afterwards."

"I will not have you here if you choose to take your father's part. You did not hear how cruelly he scolded me this morning."

"I know how it was, mamma. We all—even Marion—thought you very strange last night, and papa looked angry and disturbed about it; and you know he is very irritable."

"*Marion* thought me strange, forsooth! She may think me stranger still, one of these fine days. If I rise from my grave to flout her, she shall know what I think of her, for winning away the love of my husband from me—that she shall."

At these words Priscilla looked entreat-

ingly at the maid, and pointed to the door. The moment's pause in the conversation caused Mrs. Cameron to turn her head, and she then perceived the signs her daughter was making to the girl.

"No, Priscilla; Mary will remain, if you please. She has been with us some years now, and if a poor, outraged mistress cannot trust her servant, after so long a time as that, I think that servant ought to be ashamed of herself."

"Please, 'm, I'd rather go, if you'll let me, than hear you go on about master—"

"Oh, ah! I see how it is! I see! You're all in league against me. It's a concerted thing—all very prettily arranged, no doubt, and very creditable to the feelings of all concerned."

"Mamma, you are not yourself; you will think so differently of all this by-and-bye; but let Mary go downstairs, and then you and I can chat quietly together," said Priscilla,

coaxingly; and upon this Mrs. Cameron gave way to a torrent of tears, under cover of which the servant retreated unperceived. Priscilla sat by for a while, and, deeply touched at the sight of her mother's real distress, tried to soothe her as best she could, but the tempest took its course, and was long before it gave signs of coming to an end. When, at length, it did die down, Priscilla hoped that the subject too, to which its upspringing was due, would not again be renewed, but in this she was disappointed. Mrs. Cameron was soothed by her daughter's endearments, but still clung to her discomposing fancies—though she expressed them in a quieter tone and manner.

"You don't see things as I do, child. You can't tell how I love your father, and how I felt he was worthy of love, and how I thought —or, rather, was sure, at one time—that he loved me. But if I could have foreseen,

Priscy, that Marion would ever have had such power over him, never would I have suffered that evil day to arise, when she entered this house. You think me odd and wrong-headed, I know; but you haven't had the same deep interest in watching them, as I have had, and therefore you are in no position to judge."

"I do so wish, mamma, I could induce you to think of papa, and Marion, in this matter as I do. You know how full of trouble she has been lately. Her father's death, in such difficulties, and Philip Harvey's strange conduct, have interested us all very much in her —papa amongst the rest; he has felt very, very sorry for her; you know he has told us both so. Marion certainly is very lovely—she cannot help being so; but we should not think ill of her because of that. She has, I know, grown to look upon papa, as a sort of second father to her; she has told me so again and again if she hasn't told you—"

"Yes, she has told me, too."

"There then; I thought she would tell you also. She would be sure to do so. Then of course, mamma, we ought all to trust her. You would not have thought of her, as you seem to do, if she were going to be married. I am going away from you all on Wednesday, and, as you know, Marion is one of the very dearest friends I have on earth, do let me entreat you not to let her suppose, that you have any strange thoughts about her. After Wednesday, she will go to her aunt's; all that is arranged, and you may be quite sure that papa would wish her to go. There, there's a good mother! She's getting over her trouble at last. There, come and rest closer to me. I shall love my husband very dearly, but shall often want my mother too. She'll have to come very often, to help Harry to keep me in order. Heyday, I think he'll repent of his bargain one day. He little knows what a rattletrap I shall be,

and how trivial I shall be thought, by all the old men, and old women, and the groaners and experience-tellers of his parish: but if only we're as happy, after all, as you and papa have been, I expect we shall find that earth is very much like heaven in some respects."

"God bless you, Priscy! You can't tell how often I pray for you, and Harry, too, that you may be happy. I think I should like to lie down now. I'm very much upset. Keep your father downstairs for awhile, and Marion; and darken the room a little, and give me some of that camphor-julep. I should so like two hours' deep sleep."

Thereupon Priscilla led her mother to the bed, and assisted her into it, and did everything as desired, and kissed her, and put loving, filial hands upon her shapely little head, and then crept downstairs to the breakfast room, to her father and Marion. It was by

this time growing very near noon, and breakfast had been commenced, but Marion and Mr. Cameron had spoken very little to each other. The gentleman was silent, from annoyance at what had taken place, and could not see his way to explain particulars of it to his fair guest. He loved his wife, with an honest man's love, and wished, as one fruit thereof, to screen her faults from observation. And the lady was silent, from very wonder, as to what she could have done to cause such an outbreak in the Cameron's family circle, though not a glimmer of suspicion had yet crossed her mind, that she had given rise to feelings of jealousy, in the breast of the hostess.

Happily a diversion was created, so as to prevent the introduction of an awkwardly embarrassing topic of conversation, by letters placed on the breakfast table, that awaited Priscilla's perusal. One of them was from Philip Harvey, addressed to her father. It

should be mentioned, that a few days previously, there had been a family conclave in order to debate the question, whether or not that gentleman should be invited to be present at the wedding. His brother had been asked, but, as Marion was to be one of the bridesmaids, it was felt that his presence, on the occasion, might be far from acceptable to her feelings, and materially interfere with her own happiness, and enjoyment of the day. It was found necessary at last, to send Priscilla as a deputation to her friend, when the point was decided, in favour of an invitation being issued to Philip, as well as to his brother. Marion had bravely said, that he had never once spoken to her of love, and that therefore he could be no more, in her eyes, than any other gentleman; and she had confided to Priscilla, her secret resolve to meet him, to the best of her ability, as though she had never felt especially interested in his welfare, more than in that of his brother, or of any other

friend. She had added that, at the farthest, his stay at the Grange would last for only a few hours, and that, during that time, she would devote such conversational powers as she possessed, to some of the many other guests who would be present; and that, in short, she would no longer allow her life to be darkened by a fancy that promised to have no future embodiment in reality. On the return, therefore, of the deputation, Mr. Cameron had written to Philip, and had that morning received from him the following reply :—

"Lowborough Hall.

"My dear Mr. Cameron,—

"Many thanks for your kind invitation to be present, at my little friend Priscilla's wedding. I wish her, and her devoted Harry, all the luck and happiness this world can give them; but I must make an excuse for myself. I cannot come. You will ask, Why not? The fact is then, that I am

about to make a similar start in life with Priscilla. She is to be married on Wednesday, you say, and it is to be my happy lot to 'victimize myself on the hymeneal altar,' on the morning of the following day—Thursday. I have never yet told you the history of this 'affaire du cœur.' You have heard, of course, of my having purchased the Lowborough property of Ashton. It is an estate that suits me very well, and Badger tells me I have it a bargain. When I went over to look at it, I was most hospitably entertained by Ashton, and his wife. They are delightful people—nearly as much so as certain other people, I could mention to you by name, who live not very far from the gate of Wimperley church. I intended, at first, to stay a day or two only, but time passed away so pleasantly, that, as I had only provided myself with a carpet bag, I felt inspired to send for my largest portmanteau. And now I must tell you *how* it came to pass that my time passed

away so pleasantly at Lowborough. It is one of the old stories we never get tired of in this world. I met there, day by day, with Emily Ashton, one certainly of the loveliest of her sex, and only just eighteen; the age

> "Where the brook and river meet,
> Womanhood and childhood fleet."

I cannot describe her, but it gives me happiness to feel you will know her one day, and then you will not wonder at what has taken place. You will wonder the less, when I confide to your keeping the fact, that she is expected one day to be very rich. You will remember the absurd way in which Frank reasoned, at a dinner party in your house, that such a circumstance was altogether an unimportant accident in marriage. I don't agree with him, and you've proved that his opinion is not yours. Did you hear, by-the-bye, that he had been—pardon me—fool

enough to give back the great tithes to St. Mark's ? I suppose you don't hold with him there. But I must hasten on away from him, merely saying that, though I asked it of him by way of compliment, he has been bear enough to refuse to be my best man at the wedding. He coolly told me he would have nothing to do with it. After this, you can't wonder if you hear that no love is lost between us.

" But to change the subject. I was afraid at first I had only little, if any, prospect of winning my fair bride-elect. I concluded, from her manner, that she was not fancy-free, though possibly, it was nothing more than that delightful retiredness, which is such a beautiful thing in woman. But a bull-chase, and a thunderstorm, were the dodges my good fortune kindly got up for me, in order to the completion of my conquest ! Whilst I was there, we had a snug pic-nic, to one of the

most delightful of dells a few miles off. Hazel and beech, and chestnut, and oak, and birch (the lady of the woods, you know), were there, in all varieties of green—green of a blue tint, and green of a brown tint, and yellow-green and grey-green, and green proper—whispering over a brawling brook, that takes its way round a bend in the dell, and rushes on in a most delightful fall of water. Emily and I, having been for the past day or two better friends, had contrived to saunter away from the rest of the party—(I think they were deep at the time in the carnal delights of pigeon-pie, ham sandwiches, and champagne)—and as we crossed a meadow, in order to reach a more secluded part of the dell, we were both so deeply engrossed in conversation, about botany and poetry, that we did not know a wretch of a bull was close upon our heels, till on hearing a tramping on the grass quite suddenly, just as if our friends, some of them,

had overtaken us, I turned round, and there his bullship was. Emily was very near the edge of the steep precipice, that descends into the dell, and I look upon it as a providential circumstance that, to avoid the bull, she did not rush into the abyss. Horrid thought! But the creature wheeled back a little, when I faced him, with a stick, and my hat at the end of it; and meanwhile Emily and I contrived to descend by a beaten track to the very bottom, where we wandered away from the others to the water's side, and sometimes rested on the soft turf. She attributed her escape from the bull to my (as she was pleased to call it) ready presence of mind. Well, there we sat regaling ourselves on a few biscuits which I happened to have with me, and Emily was so chatty, and so fearless, that I could scarcely think we were in this world, till one of those very mundane things, a summer's thunderstorm, came on, and dispelled

my day-dream. Then we were obliged to flee together to the friendly shelter of a cave close by, about which there is a stupid local legend. Once in it we could not leave it, for it rained pitilessly and thundered tremendously. Emily, I could see, did not half like the lightning, and wasn't sorry to get a little closer to me; but, to make a long story short, when, after the storm was over, she wanted to get away, I would not let her—and, before we started back to where we expected to find our companions, she had promised to become my wife. On Thursday next she is to fulfil that promise, and I am to be the happiest of men. I suppose, Mrs. Cameron and you can't come to the breakfast; if, however, you can, we shall be heartily glad to see you. Kind regards to all.

"Yours very sincerely,

"PHILIP H. GRINDSTONE."

"Dudley Cameron, Esq."

"P.S. I can't get out of my head the singular resemblance there is, as to its nature and associations, between our love-match, and the sweet dell in which it was concluded. Do you wonder what I mean? Why, this. Wasn't Dame Nature torn open and twisted, just in that spot, by an awful convulsion, into the loveliest and most sequestered of dells, full of brook-music, and graceful shrubs, and wild flowers? And may not a bull and a thunder-storm have helped to overcome my dear Emily's scruples, so as to induce her to tread with me the musical and flowery paths—you know—of wedded life? Rather a striking parallel, Cameron, now isn't it?

"P. H. G."

"Well, papa," asked Priscilla, as she flung down this composition to the floor, "do you wish me to tell you what I think about that letter, and what I think about the writer?"

"H'm! Some actions speak as plainly as words, don't they, Marion? You show us already what you think of it," replied her father.

"I think this—that it is the fluent scribble of a sordid, selfish, miserable coxcomb; and I say this—that if all the young men who can talk about botany, and quote poetry, acted as he has acted, I would have them sent to Coventry by all the women in the universe worth speaking to. Flowery paths! forsooth! it's well if he hasn't to wade through beds of stinging nettles all his life, and have the thunder of a scolding wife's tongue rattling in his ears. I shall have the privilege of giving him a lesson yet, Marion, before he's many hours older. Papa, if he sends to us his wedding cards, please forward them on to me."

"I have a crow to pluck with him myself, my dear, in the first instance," returned Mr.

Cameron. "He shall hear what I think about his love affair by-and-bye."

"No, no, Mr. Cameron; please let bye-gones be byegones," pleaded Marion; but she pleaded in vain.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE BISHOP, AND HIS CHAPLAIN, THOUGHT ABOUT FRANK'S LETTER.

The Rev. Henry Pitman, Curate of Wimperley, and Priscilla Cameron duly became husband and wife, and as nature had not doffed her "wintry trim" when the auspicious event took place, and had kept in reserve for the happy bridal pair, no snug little edition of Paradise anywhere, even among the lovely and sequestered Devonshire dales, they were

fain to pass the honeymoon in London. Meanwhile the bishop of the diocese, in which Lowchester is situated, had duly received a communication from Frank relative to his voluntary surrender of the great tithes of St. Mark's in favour of the Vicar of that parish, and had regarded it with very mingled feelings. The bishop was white-headed now; his steps were not so firm as they had been a year or two previously, when it may be remembered he had personally visited the parish of Hollowdale, of which his Lordship's examining chaplain, the Rev. Philip Deverel, was rector, in order the better to enquire into the particulars of sundry grave charges against that gentleman, on the score of his alleged ultra-ritualism, which had been forwarded to the Palace, by the Dissenters and mal-contents generally of the said parish. Possibly Mr. Titus Tonks and his friends regarded it as a step indicative of unbecoming servility, or senile folly and weakness on the part of

the Bishop, when, about eighteen months afterwards, they learned that their rector, a ripe classical and theological scholar, had been asked by his diocesan to undertake the post of Examining Chaplain to his lordship, although he had not, in even the least item, altered his previous views on the subject of baptismal regeneration, which Mr. Tonks, and other local magnates of the same school of thought, had set down as dark and anti-scriptural.

When the good Bishop received Frank's communication, and its enclosed cheque, Mr. Deverel was staying at the Palace. As he read the letter, he felt glad of this circumstance, and prompted to confer with his chaplain on the subject of its contents. At first it appeared to be hard of realization, that a clergyman in his Diocese, towards whom he had always had such friendly feelings, should, so very unexpectedly, have had help vouchsafed to him, which would place him so high

and dry, above his heart-wearying troubles. But he read the letter again and again, and scrutinized the cheque carefully through his eye-glass, stooping over it closely, in order to do so effectually, and at last he sat back in his easy-chair, and closed his eyes, holding meanwhile the letter and the cheque very firmly in his hand. Thought was very busy indeed with him during the few minutes he sat thus, and when he opened his eyes again, it would have been quite plain to any beholder that they were very moist. The Bishop of Norcaster was a man of very large heart—especially towards the more hampered among the clergy of his Diocese. Old as he was, and with that which the wisest of men calls "a crown of glory" on his broad, massive head, he still discharged the duties of his office in no perfunctory manner. His head was still clear, and was very much under the control of his heart. His episcopal charges were as full of heart, as they were of weight

and wisdom. When he held his confirmations, he was careful to *press* the heads of his young people with *both* hands, and there was a good deal of heart in his touch then. By this practice, moreover, he accidentally spared the superstitious among his candidates, the trouble of looking up while their heads were under manipulation, in order to see whether the right hand or the left rested upon them; it being the impression of some, who approach that interesting and impressive rite, that if the Bishop should place his right hand upon their heads, all would go well with them in after life, but that the touch of the episcopal left hand, was, prophetically speaking, no good or hopeful sign. So that, in this case, it was well that the Bishop's heart ruled his head. Other prelates got through their appointed work sooner than he did, but it may be questioned whether their quicker *touch* was so well remembered, or produced so lasting an effect, as his fervent, prayerful

pressure. When this worthy successor of the apostles had again opened his eyes, he paused a moment, and then rose and rang the bell. Before the round, portly form—rather slower in its powers of locomotion than it had been a year or two ago—had regained a sitting posture, a servant appeared, in answer to his master's summons. The Bishop looked at him quietly, and asked, a little tremulously the man thought—

"John, do you know where Mr. Deverel is?"

"Yes, my lord; in the drawing-room," was the reply.

"Will you say I should be glad to see him, if he is at liberty?" added the Bishop.

Mr. Deverel was at liberty. He was always at liberty, when his Diocesan sent for him, if one might judge by the promptitude with which he obeyed the summons, as often as it was given, to the Episcopal presence. So Mr. Deverel left his little wife Blanche in the

drawing-room with the family, and proceeded to the library, where he was presently motioned to a chair.

"Mr. Deverel, I've a letter here I want to talk to you about. Just read it, please."

The chaplain did so, and his countenance was a study, during the time in which he was so engaged. The glow of pleasure shewn by the bright look of his eyes, and the smile, quiet and genial, and the emotion just evident in a momentary compression of the lips, and a momentary start of one of his hands, were all so many proofs of the power of one mind over another, by means of that mighty agent, for weal or for woe, the pen.

"What do you think about it, Mr. Deverel?" asked the Bishop, when the letter had been placed in his hands again.

"Think of it, my lord? I can hardly tell you. It is real, I suppose?"

"Yes, it is real. I see you feel it as hard to believe as I did."

"Such instances of goodness are so very rare; so unlike human nature. But such a letter as that really makes one take more kindly to one's fellow-men."

"Do you know anything of the writer, Mr. Deverel?"

"My knowledge of him is of the smallest kind. I have just met with, and spoken to him at an evening party."

"I should like to have his photograph, Mr. Deverel. How can I get it now?"

The chaplain smiled sympathetically.

"I think, my lord, the ladies of your lordship's family, would agree in the opinion, that they had seen many far handsomer men," returned the Chaplain.

"Very likely," said the Bishop, smiling good-humouredly, "but 'handsome is that handsome does.' I think that's the proverb, isn't it?"

Mr. Deverel signified his belief that it was so.

"Well, now, I sent for you in order that we might talk it over, Mr. Deverel. I should like to have your opinion about it before I reply to Mr. Grindstone. I think his letter is so worded, as to lead one to believe he looks upon what he has done, as a pure matter of duty. He evidently has no wish that we should think he is bestowing a favour on the Church, in his restoration of these great tithes. Don't you think it is so?"

"Yes, my lord, I do. His words are 'I restore it, as part of a debt long due.'"

"Well, but the point for us to come to some decision upon, is just this. For this good gentleman's sake, we must examine closely, how far, justly and morally, it can be called a debt. Don't you see this, Mr. Deverel? If we can decide that he looks at the matter from a false point of view, if we can shew him plainly, that there is no possible cause or reason, that ought to have led him to make the restoration of this money a matter of

conscience at all, he might wish to modify his gift. I am sure he would not withdraw it; and, at all events, in that case, it is due to him that he should be brought to look upon the gift, in the light of a benevolent action. I mean this, Mr. Deverel, that I think our friend should be induced by us to feel, that his act is one, not of bare justice—as he would hold it to be,—but of a generosity that, so far as my experience goes—and it is that of a long life—has but very few parallels."

"I think, my lord," returned Philip Deverel, "the case is one we can scarcely misunderstand. In so far as the verdict of human law is concerned, Mr. Grindstone has done an act of benevolence, which he could not have been forced to do. In so far as divine law is concerned, I think your lordship will agree with me, that, in the restitution of the great tithes to the church, he has simply, in God's sight, paid a debt, which the church ought to have received centuries ago. The

question is, how far the institutions of man can properly be considered to possess sufficient authority, to set aside those of heaven? If these latter were based, in the first instance, on certain fundamental principles as to right and wrong, which commended themselves to The Infinitely Just and Unchangeable Mind, how far can we reasonably hold that human justice may have found for itself, in this matter, fundamental principles, of superior worth to those of heaven? And how far should we decide, that human justice is right, when it allows a debt to remain, unclaimed, simply because of the mere lapse of time during which it has existed—as though it acted on the supposition, that God might have changed His mind in the interim?"

"Yes, yes, I see what you mean. I understand you perfectly, Mr. Deverel. The decisions of Eternal Justice, in this matter, are as Eternal in their nature as their Divine Author, and, so far, the Church has unques-

tionably, a right to have those tithes restored to her, to the very last farthing, of which she was unjustly despoiled years ago. But there is a question how far this long unpaid debt, on the part of our lay impropriators, may come under the category of debts in general, and so be cancelled, because it has existed so very much longer, than the period after which Divine Justice itself decreed, that any debt should not be called for ?"

"I think your lordship will agree with me that this debt of lay-impropriation can scarcely belong to the same category with debts in general. Divine Justice ought not to be contravened. It was contravened, when the church was despoiled of her great tithes, in favour of the laity. It is a spoliation. It is, in its essence, a different thing altogether from a debt. That is a matter of contract, based on certain allowed principles of human law. This arose, in the first instance, from the wrongful exercise of sovereign lay-power. I

need not remind your lordship that, under the Law Moses ordained, 'All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, *is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.*' Now when a certain monarch, for whose acts we can have no respect, despoiled the Church of her great tithes, and enabled therewith certain great families to increase their worldly importance thereby, did he act by those tithes as though they were holy to the Lord? And how far do the descendants of those great families, or indeed all lay impropriators, regard those tithes in their possession as 'holy to the Lord,' when they spend them upon their wine, and their horses, and their luxuries?"

"I am just reminded by what you say, Mr. Deverel, of that passage in the 'Apostolic Constitutions.' Will you favour me by reaching the book down? I can't reach it quite as well as formerly. Thank you. There!

this is the passage I meant—'Hear this, you of the laity, also * * * * Hear attentively now what was said formerly. Oblations and tithes belong to Christ, our High Priest, and to those who minister to him.' So much for the early history of tithes, as the means of enabling the Church to maintain her honour and influence among the people, long before Roman Catholic heresy and corruption were developed. And I think there are many other authorities, which the laity dare not, or rather cannot controvert in proof of the position that tithes, great and small, as in their very nature and constitution they are 'holy to the Lord,' so are improperly used, and wrested from the purpose to which they were at first devoted, where they are made to subserve the worldly luxury, either of a corrupt and apostate Church, or of the laity. These last cannot, in any special sense, be called the ministers of Christ, and therefore no tithes

could have been intended for them according to those eternal principles of right on which tithes for the support of the clergy, who alone, in any special sense, can be called 'ministers of Christ,' are founded."

"Then your lordship's course is clear as to the acceptance of Mr. Grindstone's offer?"

"Yes, I think it is, Mr. Deverel, I think it is. But I'm glad we've chatted it over, you know. And it may be an old man's doggedness and pertinacity, but I can't bring myself to believe that he has not acted, as well in a very benevolent, and uncalled for, as in a very just and honourable manner."

"My poor friend Nichols is failing very much. Are you aware of that, my lord?"

"I thought so. I watched him at my last visitation. He had the look of a man whose life was running out fast. The mischief might have been stemmed, when he was younger, if those who could have relieved

him of his anxieties, had stepped forward to do so. There is a good deal of innate selfishness in the world, and that makes me so glad that I have, in my diocese, so noble an instance of self-denial, from a sense of duty, as in Mr. Grindstone. You say you have met with him?"

"Yes, but only for a few hours."

"Still, in that time you made his acquaintance, and through you I can make it also. If you and Mrs. Deverel will prolong your stay with us a little, I will give him an invitation to join you."

"Thanks, my lord; I see no reason against it, as far as we are concerned."

"Then go and tell Mrs. Deverel what is expected of her—by her bishop, you know. No disobedience; and meanwhile I'll write a few letters, and join you by-and-bye."

And the Bishop spent another hour or two as he proposed, and to us belongs the

chronicler's inalienable right of looking over his shoulders, while he writes two of his letters. This was the first :—

"The Palace, Norcaster.

"My dear Sir,

"I have received your letter and cheque, and feel quite at a loss for words in which to characterise my high sense of your Christian honour and munificence. I rejoice, very heartily, that I have, in my diocese, one who is disposed to use the wealth, with which Divine Providence has entrusted him, in so thoroughly unworldly and unselfish a manner. I hope you may enjoy a long life yourself, and have, what I know will be to you the great pleasure, of seeing that your generous gift has benefitted one whom I much esteem, but who, I fear, is in a very critical state of health.

"We have a friend of yours staying at the Palace, in the person of Mr. Deverel, my

Chaplain. Will you come to us for a week or two, that I may have the great pleasure of an introduction? Mrs. Deverel, and her husband, will prolong their stay with us, in order to meet you.

"By this post I shall do myself, D.V., the pleasure of forwarding your cheque to Mr. Nichols, who, I doubt not, on my persuasion, will have no remaining scruple in the way of accepting it.

"I hope for the promise of an early visit from you by return.

"Believe me,

"Your's very truly,

"H. Norcaster.

"Francis Harvey Grindstone, Esq."

And the second letter ran as follows :—

"The Palace, Norcaster.

"My dear Sir,—

"I enclose you a cheque which your kind friend, Mr. Grindstone, wished to

transmit to you through my hands. On mature deliberation, I see no possible objection, in the way of you accepting it, and I very sincerely trust that its receipt may be the commencement of more prosperous days, for you and yours.

"Believe me,

"Your's very faithfully,

"H. NORCASTER.

"Rev. T. NICHOLS."

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK OFFERS TO REFER TO PRISCILLA FOR A TESTIMONIAL.

The rector of Wimperley, during the whole of Mr. Pitman's tenure of the curacy, had been non-resident on account of infirm health, and there had been an arrangement, made by that gentleman, that his curate should have the rectory house, as part of the stipend. Mr. Pitman heard from his rector four times a year, and his communications on those occa-

sions were very brief, and contained little or no reference to spiritual matters. In the year during which Mr. Pitman took to himself a wife, he received a fifth letter from his rector, very satisfactory to his feelings, on account of the hearty congratulations it contained. Mr. Pitman, then, was not a discontented curate, he was not being killed day by day through hard work. The Rectory house was close to the Grange, so that there was a constant interchange of visits between the residents at the one, and at the other. Mr. and Mrs. Pitman, moreover, belonged to that delightful order of men and women, who are not so much absorbed in their own happiness, as to neglect to do their part towards the promotion of that of their fellow-creatures. They were young people of genial, hospitable souls, who were already well-known, and of most kindly reputation among their poorer neighbours, and, in addition to that, it was clearly the creed of both, that, in order to their influ-

ence being the more felt, it was expedient for them to be on terms of very friendly intimacy with their neighbours, whose positions in life more or less resembled their own. They had happily no financial cares to put a strong curb upon their benevolent intentions, in the way of giving occasional dinners to the said neighbours. Mr. Pitman, when a bachelor, had been of necessity sparing in this particular. Occasionally he had had the great pleasure of receiving guests, when his father or sister had been staying with him, but now that, on the occasion of his marriage, his father had added to his former allowance, and that he had also received an income with Priscilla, he was able to act upon the dictates of a generous heart, and devote himself to constant and earnest culture of the social virtues. He, despite his clerical profession, was one of the raciest and best-humoured of hosts, and Priscilla excelled in a wit and repartee that had no sting in them, and by

which, therefore, none of the absent, to which they might contain a reference, would be likely to be wounded. One of her virtues was the habit she had formed of remembering that, as, strictly speaking, she was only herself a woman, and therefore imperfect at the best, there were points in her character which she might not like to have unkindly commented upon in her own absence: and hence her observation of that golden rule, which it would be more to the credit and honour of our poor, vulnerable human nature, to observe better than it is observed.

Now, whether it was that Frank's consciousness of having done a good action, or his want, as yet, of any fixed employment in life, or his social habits inclined him, for a while, to give himself up to the pleasure of social intercourse with his friends, I cannot say, but certain it is that the Bishop's letter found him sojourning at the Grange. He had been staying there ever since a certain

dinner-party, which the Camerons had given, in honour of the return of the bride and bridegroom from their wedding tour. Mr. Cameron had, in vain, tried to convert him to his own views, as to the perfect right of the laity to hold, and make use for their own purposes, of the tithes of the Church. In his endeavours so to do, he had been assisted by the friendly legal acumen of Mr. Wright, but without the least trace of success. He was then prolonging his stay at the Grange, and Marion, having been again recalled from her aunt's to become the guest of the Pitmans, had not yet returned to her. The hope-breathing days of spring had returned—"beautiful, lengthening days, pressing back with both hands the shades of morning and evening," and, Frank, always fond of the country, was just then peculiarly drawn towards the opening out into beauty and fruitfulness of its rich vegetation. And as he sauntered about the Wimperley lanes with

his friends the Pitmans, and their guest, he caught that very common infection, to which bachelors are so much exposed, when thrown into the society of their fair countrywomen, in the very presence of those who have been lately married, and are so provokingly happy with each other, that one cannot get rid of an impulse to endeavour to follow their example with the least possible delay. This was the feverish longing that fell again upon Frank with all its intensity. Once he had restrained it, in the belief that Marion could never be his: but now that his brother Philip had contracted a marriage, at which, because of his sense of the injury that brother had inflicted upon Marion, he refused to be present, and Marion was left an orphan—her nearest relative an aunt advanced in years, and of most limited financial resources—he felt the time had come when he might again lay siege to her affections, and her hand, with a little better hope of success. They were

often in each other's society: and Frank, himself a man of generous impulses, was not likely to spend much time in rambling with the woman he had once sought, though then unsuccessfully, to win, without availing himself of the changes that had taken place, to press his suit again. Priscilla had told him, in former days—having found out his secret—that she feared there was little hope for him of obtaining her friend: but, lately, unknown to him, she had privately tried to ascertain, if there were any feeling in course of development in Marion, towards him, which might possibly give encouragement to his hopes. She had dwelt much on his noble, self-denying, and philanthropic nature, and had found that, so far as that was concerned, Marion's enthusiasm was fully equal to her own. Then she had cautiously striven to pierce below the surface of the fair girl's outer coating of womanly reserve, in order to ascertain, if possible, if there were any present hope of

this admiration deepening into love. In reply to these skirmishing and insinuating questions, there had been replies of the most vague description, accompanied, however, with flitting blushes, and evasions of the topic, not as altogether unwelcome, but as being quite uncalled for. Then her affectionate interest in the future of a man she so greatly admired and esteemed, had led her to rally him, with the proper modicum of maidenly reserve at first, and, since her marriage, with an air of matronly patronage quite refreshing to observe, on his own intentions with reference to matrimony; and one fine spring evening, while she and Frank strolled together through the Rectory grounds, he had privately confided to her, in the openness of his nature, that his feelings towards Marion had gained strength, but that there were other reasons, on account of which he had not again ventured as yet to express them to her. We all know that women have much curiosity in their constitu-

tion—possibly it may be the case with men also, notwithstanding their assumption of a lordly superiority to such weakness—and, with this fact, gleaned from the study of human nature, before us, it may not cause very great surprise to add that, after sundry persevering efforts to arrive, by indirect ways, at the nature of her friend's scruples above referred to, she was at last put in possession of them. He had, he said, peculiar views, as to the disposition of his property, which might be distasteful to Marion. It was his intention to adopt a style of living, which a wife might regard, as one inconsistent with his known wealth, and station in society. Such confessions only increased Priscilla's admiration for her friend, and led her to encourage his advances towards Marion by all means in her power.

There arrived, at last, a day on which Harry and Priscilla had gone a drive together, in search of some celebrated ruins a few miles

off. They had each asked Marion to accompany them, but she had fancied, from certain remarks made by her host a day or two before, in the presence of his wife and herself, as to the superior enjoyment of "picnics of two," that she might be *de trop* if she should consent to accompany her friends, and on that account she had been allowed to reserve her reasons for declining the expedition, and remain at the Rectory. When, some time afterwards, Priscilla rallied Frank on the promptness which characterised his call at the Rectory, so soon after he must have seen their carriage turn out through its gate, he only laughed, and appeared to be averse to take pains to repel her charge. He appeared, at the time, to find it easier to take refuge from her pointed attack, behind the covert of amusement, than to repel her charge of clever tact and slyness on the occasion.

He had been engaged that morning in the patient study of the "Times." Mr. Cameron

had gone into Lowchester to take his seat on the magistrates' bench, and Mrs. Cameron had accompanied him. Meanwhile Frank, seated in an easy chair in the library, had received his letters, and answered the one from the Bishop, accepting his Lordship's invitation, for any day that might be most convenient to himself. It is, perhaps, impossible that any man can read the "Times" with an interest like his who has a large capital at command. The eyes of others would wander listlessly over its columns of dreary advertisements, much as their feet would do over leagues of barren sand—if, that is to say, every line in that wilderness of print had to be read and pondered. But the capitalist cannot fail to have a lively interest in its pages. Francis Harvey Grindstone, however, read it without the narrow, selfish hunger of the mere capitalist upon him. He had not lost the sin-taint of his humanity; again and again, as he felt sure, the tempter would lay

snares in his path, but to a great extent he had broken the spell of that evil power over him in his restitution of the great tithes to the Vicar, now the Rector of St. Mark's. Previous to his achievement, in a strength not his own, of that action, he might have read his paper with his whole heart and soul absorbed in the prospects of the money market; but, since that act of self-denial, he had received strength to give up his wealth to the Great Giver of it, in connection with the Church's highest act of adoration; and now, while his brother Philip and such like worldlings, acted as though they lived and breathed only for money and self, he could read the "Times," with his cheque-book at his elbow, and lay up riches for himself in that Bank of Heaven, that takes special note of all that is done upon earth, for the suffering and the sorrowful. To him the "Times" was one of his most valued helpers in doing good. Did a hospital stand in need of funds? His

eyes were upon the paragraph, or advertisement, which proclaimed that want to a selfish, narrow-hearted world, while those of Philip hunted eagerly for safe and speedy means of increasing his wealth. And, in an early issue of that paper afterwards, you would see that that hospital had had its funds largely increased, by a donor who had refused his name. By hundreds of thousands of ordinary men, the advertisements that told feelingly of sorrow, suffering, and privation were passed coldly, and perhaps sneeringly, over. The usurer, with spasmodic action, clutched his gold the more firmly as he read them; and the mere man of wealth, whose highest ambition was to lay up in his cellar the choicest wines, shrugged his shoulders, and passed on to matter in print more congenial to his taste. He could afford to pamper himself, but had no heart or means to waste on the relief of human misery. But Frank picked out such advertisements, and his eyes bright-

ened as he read them, and as he felt how soon he should receive thanks—if, on enquiry, the case proved to be a genuine one—for having caused some sorrow-laden heart to sing for joy. There are some such as he—scattered up and down in an evil world—men and women whom the wiseacres of the said world criticise as eccentric, or, possibly, insane; but they are but few and far between. There is urgent need that, as our vast population increases, and active competition raises the prices of the necessaries of life, their number should increase. Oh! that some of those who are now gloating over their perishable treasures, chained in the sleep and darkness of the strong room, or the miser's chest, would cease to tread the road to hell, and lessen their vast, lumbering capital, in order that the struggling, but disappointed poor might have comfort and succour, in the evil hours, ungladdened and unknown, that fall to their lot. God has given money, as

will be seen on the great day that is fast hastening on, in order that there should arise upon the earth, a vast army, marching forth under His banner, bearing their wealth with them to wrestle with the misery and privation that is abroad among the millions—rather than virtually, if not actually, do the work of the evil one with it, in their own spiritual self-destruction;—and in that of others who learn to say "there is no God," because, out of the hearts of the wealthy, there is no outflow of brotherly love towards them. The cancer of a deadly apathy is there, where the warm stream of charity ought to be.

Frank was aroused out of this very uncommon kind of interest in the "Times" by a simple but familiar sight and sound. He was on the point of dipping his pen in ink, in order to the publication of his feelings, on one of the crying evils of the day, in the shape of a letter to the editor—a kind of communication to which he invariably affixed

his name and address, except when they were accompanied by remittances—when he caught distinctly the sound of wheels, rumbling over the gravelled drive, that led to the front door of the Rectory. The library window of the Grange overlooked the Rectory, which was situated on lower ground, at the distance of about a hundred and fifty yards. Once out of his seat, and at the window, he paused there awhile. Marion stood at the front door, dressed for a morning walk in the garden. He waited a little longer on his vantage-ground of observation, and could then see that she had passed, through a side door, into a shrubbery, and garden, in the rear of the house. He had been making up his mind, of late, to approach her once again, on the subject that lay nearest to his heart, and now there was an opportunity of doing so, of which he resolved at once to avail himself. Slipping, therefore, his letters into the Grange post-bag, he put on his hat, and made straight for

the garden aforesaid, where he expected to find the young lady. She was just a little startled, but by no means displeased when he joined her, and asked if she would permit him to be her companion for a while, in her morning stroll—a request she graciously acceded to.

They took a few turns together, side by side, speaking a few words to each other on entirely unimportant and irrelevant topics; and then there was a rather embarrassing silence. Marion broke it, by one or two attempts to renew the conversation, but in this she was unsuccessful. Frank answered vaguely, as though he had not distinctly heard what she said. Presently, he dislodged, with his walking-cane, one or two intrusive weeds from the garden walk, along which they were proceeding, and began—

"Marion—may I call you so?—I have been wanting, for a very long time, to speak to you about a matter which, I feel, you *must*

hear from me one day;—and d'ye know, I think the sooner I speak about it the better, for then we shall the sooner understand each other. I think you know, that for some time, I have felt an interest in you which a man is allowed to feel in one only out of the world of women."

Frank looked into her face earnestly as he spoke, and saw that it deepened in colour, and drooped timidly, beneath the broad straw hat, that set off her beautiful face to advantage. Marion might certainly have worn a hat, in which she would not have looked so well as at that moment.

"With my present fortune, and owing to recent circumstances" (he referred to Philip's marriage, though he did not mention his name), "I feel I may now ask of you a reciprocal interest in myself. I want—let me be bold enough to say it—you to love me in return;—if you feel you can do so."

We men have all of us for the most part

come to that very embarrassing confession, and some of us—probably by far the greater number—could not remember, if it were to save our lives, the exact words in which it was conveyed. We have our wives under the same roof with us, and we know, by that alone, that it must have been embodied in some words or other, brave or nervous, plain or confused, short or prolix. I have told you now what Frank said, and I think my lady-readers would tell me that Marion would be by no means likely to misunderstand the tenor of it. The event shewed at least that she did not.

"But—Mr. Grindstone—"

"No; call me Frank—do."

"Mr. Frank, there is so great a difference between us in worldly position. I am a poor girl—I never thought I should be so poor,—but you know the history of it."

"Yes, I do; and, therefore, you need not say a word about *that* part of the subject."

"It is a great question whether I shall ever be richer than I am now, though my poor father—"

"Don't speak of that. Your position, as to that, is not of the least importance. It has nothing to do with the matter. I have enough for both."

"I—was—hardly prepared for this."

"Dont't say quite that. Mrs.—I mean Priscilla—like a good soul as she is, has now and then said a good word for me. I know she has. I must refer to her for a testimonial."

"Mr. Frank!"

"Yes?" "Priscilla *has* interceded for me, Marion dear?"

"Yes; but she did not say. I didn't think, or expect—"

Marion's face was covered now with rich, mantling blushes, but it was still averted from her companion's eyes.

"Yes?"

"Oh, I don't know what I was going to say."

Here she turned round, and looked up very timidly into Frank's face.

"Then, at all events, you will not say no?"

"I cannot. But you deserve a better wife than ever I can be to you."

How is it that both men and women, in some of their amiable moods, can with so little compunction—nay, with such positive complacency—speak of themselves, as they would be mortally offended, if another—even their dearest friend—chose to speak of them?

If Priscilla Pitman, or even Mrs. Cameron, had said to Marion, "Frank deserves a better wife than ever you can be to him," how those pretty lips would have pouted! What angry, indignant words that tongue—generally so gentle—would have uttered! Poor human nature!

In reply, however, to Marion's last words,

Frank wound his arm round her, and pressed his lips to her right cheek—for that was the nearest to him. They were in a sequestered part of the grounds at the time, perfectly hidden as well from the house as the road, which was a fortunate circumstance, that Frank, most probably, had forgotten.

Oh, that blissful moment, when, for the first time, the maiden to whom you have breathed your heart's true, pure love, tells you it is reciprocated! What an intoxication there is in it! How it lingers in, and is caressed by the loving, yearning memory—even down to the time, when the form you drew towards you, on that occasion, is dearer than ever to you, though it has lost its characteristic graces, and, alas, the once round blushing face has wrinkles upon it, and the hair is thin and scanty, and gray, that erst was so beautiful and so plentiful,—the time when, perhaps, there are children and grandchildren innumerable round, to call her blessed!

Frank lingered in the garden still, and Marion made no attempt to retire into the house.

"You know, Marion love, I am rich now; but I want a little more talk with you. I have of you what I wanted; but I ought to say something to you about my life plans,—about the expenditure, I mean, of my fortune. We shall be at one, I hope, in that?"

"I am sure we shall."

"You knew some little of my uncle, and must have heard that—between ourselves—he was more than a little unscrupulous in making his money. But I will not say more about *that*. It is possible for you and me to devote the money to good purposes, now we have it."

"You and me!" Happy, trustful, incautious, hopeful nature! He spoke as though Marion were his wife already;—"no slips between the cup and the lip,"—no possible separation.

"As you will, Frank."

"My fortune, in round figures, amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. One hundred thousand pounds of it, including the capital of the restored tithes, I shall not touch for our use. It is a consecrated sum. You understand, Marion?"

"Yes, I do."

"I purpose that we should live very plainly. The Poplars will be vacant in six months. Would it content you that we should have that for our home?"

"Oh, Frank!"

"You will bear bravely with me the world's censure? You will act with me in the disposition of that money—two-thirds of the property—which we are not to touch for our own benefit? You will join with me, my darling, in the consecration of it to the Great Giver? Can you, really, take upon yourself so great a self-denial?"

"If *you* have done so, surely I can."

And there was such a beautiful glow upon her face, such a liquid depth of sincerity and love in her eyes, as she spoke, that Frank pressed her lips again with his, and she looked so provokingly happy, and even merry, after he had done this, that presently he kissed her again.

"You can exist without a fine house, and estate, and tell me, out of the depths of your own heart, how best to employ that, over which we shall simply have control for others' benefit?"

"I can: I will do my best to please you," replied Marion, looking again up into his face with something like an arch smile.

"I am so glad the people at the Grange, and here are all out," said Frank.

"Are you?" answered Marion. "Won't they be shocked when they come back?"

"Oh, dreadfully, no doubt. There may be

a dinner party on the strength of it. Cameron and Pitman are both so fond of letting off their enthusiasm in that way."

"And Mrs. Cameron won't be jealous now, I suppose?" suggested Marion, mischievously,

"Tush! Jealous! How absurd!" replied Frank.

"Very! Poor Mr. Cameron!" said Marion.

And so they walked and talked in the garden, and then rested on a garden seat, and then Frank would have his fair wife-elect stroll out with him into the quiet, grassy lanes. He felt as though he could not tear himself away from her.

And in the hearts of both there was a peace, and a restfulness, and a joy that rather resembled the paradise that was within the hearts of Adam and Eve before they fell, than any lower, earthlier bliss. And such was their converse that Frank's heart was full

of a fervent thankfulness that he had been strengthened to dispose of his property as he had done, and that, in Marion's love, he had received more than an equivalent for it even on earth.

CHAPTER VII.

"RARA AVIS IN TERRIS."

The Bishop of Norcaster was rich in one respect. He had a large family of children. All who were privileged to visit the Palace declared—and with truth—that his Lordship had not only a large, but a fine family. His sons, some of them in Orders, and more or less distinguished, at the one, or the other of the Universities, were also, at the time to which this tale refers, strong and manly. His

daughters could never, in strict speech, be called women of the world. Some of them were beautiful girls, and of a somewhat stately presence, but they were gentle, and kindly, and entirely free from self-assertion and obtrusiveness. They were graceful in person, very pleasing in manners, and endowed with solid qualities of heart and mind. Without flattery, or the just imputation of putting upon our picture too much colour, it might be said that the sons had grown up as "young plants" (from a goodly stock) "and the daughters as the polished corners of the temple."

Frank arrived at the Palace late in the day which the Bishop had named for the commencement of his visit, and felt a little nervous, as to the manner of his reception. But every one put him completely at his ease, though, as a consequence of his train having been delayed, he was the last of the guests who arrived in the drawing-room previously

to the announcement of dinner: not so late, however, as to be debarred the privilege of establishing himself on something like a friendly footing with his right reverend host, and the family, before the dinner-gong sounded. The Bishop had advanced to meet him from the library door, as he entered the hall, so that, on entering the drawing-room, he proceeded at once to be introduced to an elderly lady, who still retained considerable roundness of features, and freshness of colour, though her hair was indisputably grey. She had, too, a beautiful mouth, and kindly, motherly eyes. Her proffered hand, and sweet smile, as she rose from her chair, and welcomed her own, and the Bishop's guest, and then assisted the Bishop, in his introductions of him to the rest of the assembled family group, made a favourable and lasting impression on him. Then the Bishop had still time to say a kindly word or two with

reference to their domestic history, before they all proceeded to the dining-room.

"Mrs. Bathurst and I are not without olive-branches, you see, Mr. Grindstone," remarked the Bishop, after the introductions were over, "and, upon the whole, I think they have lost a good deal of the wild olive, and the new graft on them is doing pretty well."

"Are you married, Mr. Grindstone?" enquired the Bishop's wife, in the innocence of a guileless nature, and without any other than a passing interest in her question—though, as he replied to it, Frank felt his face glow.

There was no affectation of grandeur or state at that dinner. It was plainly served, and while it continued there was no lack of cheerful conversation. Frank ingratiated himself with his hostess, by the readiness with which, from his place on her right hand, he

took upon himself the office of carver. The said office, as it appeared, had generally been performed, in Mrs. Bathurst's behalf, by the Chaplain, but, in consideration of the new arrival, that gentleman was pleasantly declared to be off duty. Before the ladies had retired, Frank could almost have believed, if he had not known it to be otherwise, that he had dined at the Palace many times.

Then the Bishop, his Chaplain, and the rest of the gentlemen, gradually fell into a more or less animated conversation on a succession of topics, till, during a momentary pause, the host turned to Frank, and asked if he had seen or heard anything of Mr. Nichols lately. He noticed that, as the Bishop put the question to him, Mr. Deverel also looked towards him, as one feeling much interested in the answer.

Now Frank had been, for some days, at Wimperley Grange, previous to his visit at the Palace, and during his sojourn there, he

had turned into a lane, in his life-journey, whose charms had absorbed all his thoughts: so that, notwithstanding his plainly-proved interest in the welfare of his clerical friend, he could only say he had heard nothing of him lately.

"I gravely fear it will be my sad duty to appoint another to that living before long," said the Bishop, feelingly.

"My Lord! is Mr. Nichols so ill as that? How very melancholy!" returned Frank.

"Yes: you, I know, will feel it to be peculiarly so: but I fear there can be no doubt, from the last accounts, that the end is near. He has been burning his candle out at both ends. A man of studious habits, of heavy domestic responsibilities, and of by no means a few trials—his health has been so seriously undermined by all these causes, that I fear no accession of income will save him."

"It is very sad, my Lord."

"The news, yesterday, was decidedly very

discouraging. He is prostrate, you know, in a nervous fever, and in his delirium, he fancies that the old strain of pecuniary care—I almost call it *torture*—is upon him. Torture enough it has been to him, for he is a man of high aims, of correct notions as to what is required of him by his calling; and when a clergyman acts, as he has acted, and still finds that he not only cannot make both ends meet, but that he is continually pestered, and annoyed, by legal processes, and cold, unsympathizing looks, it is likely to have a bad effect upon him in every way."

"But, my Lord, how is it possible for any clergyman to make both ends meet with only a hundred and twenty pounds a year?" asked Frank.

"It is utterly—*ridiculously* impossible, and how then can a bishop be expected to blame in such a case? You little know what a number of trying letters reach me by every post—bearing on the financial misery of my

clergy—and it is altogether impossible for me to help it. And there is another thing that distresses—nay, *fires* me, when I think of it—that if there were a little concentrated effort, the evil might be remedied."

"There are societies, my Lord,—are there not,—for the augmentation of curates' incomes?"

"Several: but they are by no means adequately supported. How *can* they be, when numbers of those who subscribe to the funds of such societies contribute a paltry guinea a year each, while their own income amounts to hundreds and thousands—aye, tens of thousands. It is too dark, now, Mr. Grindstone, for you to see far through this window, but if, to-morrow morning, you look out from your bed-room window, you will see a splendid belt of woods, stretching far over the hills to the west of us. They girdle round a park and mansion, the seat of a viscount. That man is supposed to possess more than a

hundred and fifty thousand a year, and he has only two children. A neighbouring clergyman called upon him, a few months since, for an annual contribution towards a society which makes—or strives to make—extra provision for our married clergy; so that, called upon as they are to give up their lives to spiritual ministrations, and honestly, as in numerous instances, they strive to do so, they may not break down under the stress of pecuniary anxiety. The clergyman to whom I refer, is a man of large heart, and, as he trotted along on his old horse towards the park, he felt sanguine of good success there. My lord was at home, and, so far, all went pleasantly. But when he disclosed the nature of his visit, the interview was very brief, and, as he said, not particularly pleasant."

"Was he refused altogether?"

"He was, indeed. My lord 'had so many calls upon him.' I tell you, Mr. Grindstone, I felt so thoroughly roused, and disgusted by

the case, knowing as I do his lordship's wealth, and extravagance, in matters of worldly luxury, that I rode over myself to him. He was not at home, but I left my card, and stated upon it why I had called. *Then* he responded. Since that day he sends, through me, his subscription of two guineas annually, and that subscription, to him, is perhaps what two sixpences would be to me. But is that Christian charity, where there is no self-denial, and which was given only because a *bishop* called when a *priest* had failed? Is that man doing his duty to the Church? If such men could be shaken into the conviction that what they are pleased to regard as the pure gold of charity, is but the copper gilt of its miserable counterfeit, such men as Mr. Nichols might have their lives lengthened, and have nerve and spirit to work; where, instead of it (and God forbid that I should blame them for it), their spirits droop and faint. Is it likely that the men who "take their fill,

and eat and drink and are merry," while the ministers of Christ have to do their best to live, and support their families on the wages of a day-labourer, will have their miserable guineas a-year accounted as an instance of their Christian charity, when the 'Thrones shall be set, and the books shall be opened, and the dead, small and *great*, shall appear before God?' I speak strongly, because my own work in this diocese is greatly hindered by such criminal apathy. People tell me I scold too much in my sermons. Scold? I must do so. I am bound to 'reprove and rebuke,' where I have experienced the fact that soft speeches do no good. No; too many of our rich men are sunk in luxury and pride, and it will be well for them, if, through the mercy of God, they do not find themselves in lower deeps still by-and-bye."

Frank's expansive heart went with every word the Bishop said, and he did not wonder that his lips trembled with the outburst of an

indignation he could not half repress—a righteous indignation, akin to that which the Master felt, when He inveighed against the scribes and pharisees in olden days.

"I said my own work suffers," added the Bishop. "I cannot get churches built, where they are absolutely required, where men are sunk in heathenism, because the infectious example of the neighbouring peer teaches them that he is practically a heathen also—that he cares nothing either for the souls or bodies of the poor around him—that while, as a mere salve to his conscience, he subscribes a mite to this society or that from year to year, he is, so far as real charity goes, a blot upon the space he occupies, and an useless drone. I deny that that is, in all cases, charity, which bears the name. The root of many so-called charitable actions, is not real, genuine benevolence, which delights in putting a strain upon oneself, so as to make sacrifices; it is rather selfishness and self-interest. There are many,

—I am convinced of it—and the misery of this world ought to be greatly the better for their existence in it (if they did their duty), whose donations are the offshoot of regard for their own standing, and importance in the world. I am not far from eighty years old, Mr. Grindstone, and have been no careless student of human nature in my time; and I cannot help saying this—that if, when we sought help for our public, or private charities, from our well-to-do laity, we could bring ourselves to go on a different tack altogether with them, we should be likely to succeed better. Work upon their self-importance, and then you may have what you want of them for the Church's good. I often think our religious societies would have their incomes largely increased, if our legislature were to agree to split up the social status of the richer laity into grades, and were to accord to them a higher, or lower position, on the social ladder proportioned to their liberality. But

that again would not be Christian charity. It would just be a price—under a fairer name, and so a sham—paid for self-assertion and self-importance. But I hope the day is still far distant, when my clergy—or, indeed, anybody, who has a large heart,—would condescend to appeal to a man's love of self, in order to the relief of suffering, and the better supply of great crying wants, rather than to the purer and better part of his nature, if worldliness has not ruined it altogether."

Then an influential layman present coughed a short, hard, dry cough, and remarked to the Bishop that he thought he was a little too severe upon the richer laity, and reminded his lordship of the very many claims they had upon them, which necessarily crippled their power of contributing as well to general as to local charities. And, in reply, the Bishop grew warm again, and referred to the parable of the good Samaritan, and remarked drily that he had never heard that the poor

wounded Jew, relieved by him, was one who had any previous local claim on his generosity, as an indigent tenant or dependent. And he caused that influential gentleman to open his eyes widely, when, afterwards, he told him of Frank's generous self-sacrifice, in the expenditure of his fortune, so that his guest was a little restless that night, after he had retired to his room, and was much haunted by a voice that bade him "go and do likewise," from whose too direct and pointed urgency he went away grieved, into much-troubled realms of dream-land. And in the visions of his head upon his bed that influential layman was reminded of Another Voice that had once said—"Sell that thou hast and give to the poor; and come, follow Me." And, for months afterwards, when misery and distress came under his observation, he felt qualms of conscience, as the Master's bidding haunted him still, but he went back to his luxuriously furnished home, and, like another Dives, drank

his costly wines, and entertained his friends —a thoroughly good fellow in their eyes— never pausing to ask whether it might not be better, every way, to expend a few hundreds a-year *less* upon his cellar, and a few hundreds *more* in the relief of the Lazarus-population at his gates. He was but one individual; but, in this world of ours, similar types of human nature are so multitudinous, that, from their united hosts, might well arise the cry— "Our name is Legion, for we are many!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

It was Sunday morning at Lowborough Park, in July, and, at nine o'clock, promised to become, eventually, one of the hottest days in that hot month. And with this promise there appeared to be blended no presage of a change to stormy weather. The trees in the park were in bright, green, luxuriant leaf, and fluttered, only languidly, in the hot, golden sunshine. Thrushes and blackbirds were yet

stretching forth voice and energy, in their tuneful, and ever-changing morning song; and light grey conies, as if they had learned, by instinct, that it was the Sabbath-morn, came forth from their coverts in the thick shrubs, and brushwood close at hand, and nibbled at something invisible;—half invisible themselves among the tall blades of grass, on the lawn in front of the house, which, by some oversight on the part of the gardener, had not yet been smoothly shaven, in honour of Philip and Emily's return from their wedding tour. There was that calm in the air, for which it is not easy to find a qualifying adjective in our earthly vocabularies,—and which is best expressed by the "Sabbath-silence" of the poet: a silence that, from some mysterious cause, or other, does not appear to be altogether "of the earth earthy," but suggests the flutter overhead of angels' wings, or the rambling forth of invisible beings from Paradise, through the still country

scenes, on which the radiancy of a cloudless Sunday morning in the summer, sheds down earnest and foretaste of its plenary redemption, yet to come.

On such a scene Philip was quietly gazing, as he stood, for a few moments, at his hall door, and turned himself now to the right, now to the left of his mansion, and drank in, wonderingly, the marvellous variations of bird-song from the woods on either side.

His bride and he had returned to their home, late on the day previously, and the lady had not yet made her appearance in the breakfast-room. As he stood there, there suddenly rang out from the old ivied tower of Lowborough Church, a portion of which he could just see peeping above the trees two miles away, a merry peal of eight bells. For a moment he paused, and luxuriated in his position there. He felt as though the bells rang, and the birds sang, for himself chiefly.

I do not attempt to defend such thoughts on his part. Philip Grindstone was a man—not the most perfect of men either—and such were the thoughts that visited his brain, unbidden, and unrejected.

Then, after the bells had continued their clamour—deliciously mellowed by distance—for a few minutes longer, he turned into the house, and entered the breakfast room. Emily was not there, and a look of vexation shot across his face. He wondered that she should be late—later than usual, on the morning when they were expected to be in their pew at church. And his look of vexation was increased not a little, when, as he came out into the hall again, her maid crossed his path, and he learned from her, that she was only just then on her way to her mistress's room. He sent a pettish message by the maid to his wife, in a tone which would certainly have conveyed, to any discriminating student of

human nature, an impression that such irritation had become chronic, and was traceable either to some interruption of friendly relations with the lady, to whom the speaker had thus communicated his sovereign will, or that he was naturally of the peevish and morose type of human nature. Presently the maid descended again, and, again meeting her master, she informed him that her mistress had said she would not fail to be in time for church, and would make her appearance when the carriage should be brought round to the door: and that she, meanwhile, begged that she might take breakfast in her room.

It will be remembered that Frank had declined to be the bridegroom's best man on his wedding day, and that Mr. Cameron, on reading Philip's letter, had signified his intention of replying to it in no very pleasant terms. It will also be remembered, that, though Emily Ashton had undertaken to become Philip's wife, she had formed an attachment of that

dreamy, uncalculating character, which is called first love, for Mr. Frederick Augustus Blaydes. A combination of those circumstances contributed to introduce just a little spice of gall and wormwood into the honeymoon, whose taste yet lingered on the bride's mental palate. Mr. Cameron had written coldly and severely, in reply to Philip's letter. and there had been a quarrel between Emily and himself on the occasion, which, if Mr. Cameron's letter had arrived a few days sooner, might have had the effect of putting off the marriage altogether. Philip had, in his indignation, put the communication from the Grange, into Emily's hands to read, and had thereby drawn a hornet's nest about his ears, in the shape of that young lady's defence of Mr. Cameron, and vituperative attack on himself. She had asked him of what value that heart could be to herself, which could have allowed him to act so cruelly and ungenerously to another, to whom he would

clearly have offered himself but for paltry monetary considerations. She had insisted that she was the victim of his avarice, and that he had been led into the marriage with her from a purely commercial point of view, and had added that she could not but despise him for it. For these reasons it will be opined that Philip's position, during the honeymoon, was by no means an enviable one. Sooth to say, he was at his wits' ends sometimes, in his anxiety to find out how he should comport himself towards his bride. He had set out upon the wedding tour, in the belief that its days would resemble those passed in Paradise, and after that only a very few of its days had passed away, discovered to his mortification that it might thenceforth be his unhappy lot to struggle for the due maintenance of his authority as a husband, and act tenaciously on his conceived right to the last word. When the lady charged him with sordid motives, in

seeking her for his wife, he parried the attack to some effect, and inflicted a rankling wound, by a *tu quoque* thrust, in the shape of a question as to what her own motives could have been, in consenting to a marriage with him. Then there had been intervals of peace, when Philip began to flatter himself that all disagreeables would, after a little while, be buried among other unwelcome byegones, but these prophetic earnests of a life of domestic squabbling had returned again, and the conviction was forced on Philip's mind, on that lovely Sunday morning, that his newly-wedded wife was not so ready to present herself at church with him, among their neighbours and friends, as, if there had been no interchange of angry words between them, she would have been. And sad as the confession is, yet it cannot be shirked. Philip was right.

It was to Philip, a cold, comfortless breakfast, and the three pretty bridesmaids who

were present at it, together with himself, and who long before his own appearance at the front door, had allowed themselves to be drawn away by the fineness of the morning to a distant part of the grounds, were but a poor substitute to him for his wife; whose absence from her table, on that morning of all others, he bitterly felt. The bride's absence, moreover, was a little mysterious to each one of her three faithful friends, and dear companions, who had assisted to support her under the trials of the wedding day; and, none the less so, from the fact, that, although she had pleaded *indisposition* to them, as the cause of her absence from the breakfast-room, she had, nevertheless, denied herself "the pleasure of seeing them" till her descent down-stairs.

The carriage was brought round to the door at ten o'clock, and a bright, gay, fashionable equipage it was—broad, and roomy, and, at the same time, elegant and quite new. A

pair of powerful grays champed eagerly at their bits, and promised, by their impatient pawings of the ground, to do their duty, at least on the matter of accomplishing the distance between the Hall and the Church in the shortest possible space of time—when their mistress should at last have taken her seat behind them. Almost fifteen minutes passed; the bells of the parish church had been, for just that time, filling the air with melody, and groups of expectant villagers were on the look out for the coming of the newly-married couple, in the lane, and about the church gates. Then Mrs. Philip appeared, and the horses, almost as if they had caught the rustling of her stiff silken dress, looked round, and snorted eagerly, and, at last, the noble creatures dashed out of the park gates into a lane redolent with wild roses and honeysuckles, with an eagerness that might almost have indicated their consciousness, by means of some quick instinct or other, that

the occasion in which they had to play a part that morning, was one of unwonted importance.

Little conversation took place during the drive. It was checked, indeed, by certain tokens, on the face of the very pretty bride, that she had been giving way to tears. Philip sat bolt upright by her side, and looked almost like a man struggling, with the least possible displacement of features, to gulp down a series of marbles, too large for his larynx to receive, and dispose of at once; and the three fair bridesmaids looked out of the carriage, in all directions, as much as they could, rather than into the countenances of their two friends opposite.

As the carriage slackened its speed opposite the village post office, an individual crossed over with the Hall letter-bag, which, before their arrival at the church gates, Philip found time to empty, and distribute its contents.

The wedding party arrived in their pew in

time for the commencement of the service, and surely never could the two first loving words of the exhortation have had a more thrilling effect than was exercised by them that morning upon *one* individual.

Mrs. Philip Harvey Grindstone had left home in one of those fits of chronic ill-humour, which, thus early in his married life, her husband had begun to fear would be difficult of eradication. The very first words she heard in her own parish church told her of sunnier days, when she was wandering among the green and gold landscapes of "Love's Young Dream." Her face flushed, and her bosom heaved almost painfully, as she entered her pew, and sank down upon her knees.

Could it be? Could there be two men known to her, each possessing the same identical tone of voice, the same mannerisms in speech. No; she looked timidly up to the speaker's face in the reading-desk, and there he was—the Frederick Augustus Blaydes, on

whom she had looked—perhaps looked still —as the most perfect of mankind.

From Lowborough Church the old horse-boxes had not, as yet, been removed, and within the privileged enclosure of his square pew, the Squire, hidden from vulgar eyes, could doze, or even read his letters to his heart's content.

Philip, I am ashamed to say, had fallen into a disgracefully bad habit, not peculiar to himself. Whether he made the mistake of supposing that he was secure against observation or not, I cannot say, but he certainly displayed so great an impatience to read the letters, which had been handed to him by the village postman, that he did so, in spite of the clergyman's effort to draw his attention away, to better subjects for thought. From one of his letters he learned, that a large sum of money he had invested in a new and popular undertaking, had realized for him a high rate of interest. It was a letter not in the best

manner possible calculated to concentrate his mind on his petitions in the Litany, as a "miserable sinner," and I will not say to how many places the "glances of his mind" sped away as he sat down afterwards, and, with bowed head, contemplated the pattern of the new carpet in his pew. Then there was another letter, whose subject was of a nature totally different from the other, and which he read through a little impatiently. It informed him, that the Missionary cause was in a declining state for want of funds; so that in many important and promising stations, the directors of the society (on whose behalf someone had ventured to make an appeal to any little Christian Charity which he might chance to possess in his composition) feared they must reduce their staff of labourers. Philip's affliction, on receipt of this intelligence, was not so great as to be irremediable. He had had such comforting news about his dividends, that he might probably have

forgotten to answer it at all, had it not been that a friend had written it. But, in his reply to that friend, he wrote as though he had, after all, been indifferently well provided with the good things of this life—expressing his "regret that in the face of the many claims upon him" he could not help the Society aforesaid. When, a short time after his reply had been posted, one of the pretty bridesmaids placed in his hands a half sheet of postscript, which she picked up from the floor of the pew, from which he learned that his brother had been in company with the Bishop of the Diocese, at breakfast in the Society's rooms, and had there and then placed a cheque for £3,000 in the hands of the Treasurers, he felt a little humiliated, and a passing cloud obscured the brightness of his joy, on account of the good news he had had as to the splendid success of his investment. But it *was* a passing cloud, for the sun broke forth again, as he once more tenderly handled,

and lovingly read the epistle about the dividends. Had he not, moreover, given that morning at the church half-a-crown in aid of that very Missionary Society—though, for the life of him, he could not recall a single word the preacher had said about the missionary cause which he had, magnanimously, no objection to benefit by the said piece of silver.

It has been said that the pews in Lowborough Church were of a kind that is now fast disappearing from our churches. It shall now be put on record that the chief pew attached to Lowborough Hall rather resembled a roomy apartment than anything else. It was fitted up with chairs, and a table, and a stove in the centre—was in fact, one of those gigantic monstrosities which were erected, in darker days, to the praise and glory of the Squire, in defiance of the teaching of the Good Book that "the rich and the poor meet together, and that The Lord is the maker

of them all." It was a little shrine sacred to the world, under the very roof of the house of God, and as such Philip used it.

It was a hot July day, and the pew door, opposite to which Emily sat, was left open, so that, if any cooler breath of air might chance to find its way into the church, it might be as kind to the Squire, and his bride, as to the humbler parishioners. Opposite to the door, another one stood, leading into the large square pew attached to the rectory. Its sole occupant this morning was a personage in widow's weeds, who, though her black hair was plentifully streaked with grey, and the lines on her face spoke of fairly advanced age, still retained a certain shapeliness of figure. During the sermon the eyes of this person were riveted on the face of the young preacher. Occasionally, there was an audible sigh, and then the widow's eyes were turned up towards the reverend gentleman in the pulpit, more intently than before. She looked, and lis-

tened as one greedy to retain every word, and looked again into the pulpit, when no utterances proceeded from it for her to listen to—as though the outflow of speech therefrom had been melody to her of the divinest kind. And when the preacher passed at last to the vestry, she followed his form with the same fixed, attentive look—one that spoke of some unusul interest in the gentleman, not less personally than ministerially.

And when the service was over, the newly married wife pressed forward, a little impulsively, towards the vestry, far from displeased to meet with "the most perfect of men" once more, and not a little triumphant in her consciousness, that she could now look upon the Reverend Frederick Augustus, as one of the dearest of her friends, and no one have the right to blame her. He had been forbidden the house before Philip could have the pleasure of making his acquaintance, but even if this had not been the case, Philip was very far

from being a man of suspicious or jealous temperament, and would still have had sufficient confidence in the integrity of his wife, and her former lover, to believe that they could meet without, in the least degree, endangering his domestic peace. So that, in any case, he would have acted just as he did act when on seeing that Emily was evidently on most cordial terms with the gentleman who had officiated that morning, he too followed into the vestry, and courteously pressed him to return to the Hall to dinner with them.

It was an unconscious stroke of policy on his part, which evidently propitiated the lady, who, from the invitation being given, looked brightly, and even gratefully into her husband's face, and warmly seconded it.

"Do come," she urged, "but it's rather amusing, isn't it, that my husband should have been so civil to you?"

Philip, as his wife spoke, turned round towards the three bridesmaids, who were

tittering, in subdued tones in the church porch, and light at once dawned upon him.

"Oh, I see. You two have known each other in happier days! and I have played the interloper in the matter. Never mind, come along, Mr. Blaydes; I won't be jealous, and we'll do our best to induce one of these young ladies to take Mrs. Grindstone's former place —if you like."

The vestry-door was open, the lady's and gentleman's tones were both hearty, and unquestionably audible, and as Frederick Augustus glanced into the church and saw the widow still sitting in the rectory pew, he looked decidedly embarrassed.

"Many thanks to both of you, but I can't really come. I am pledged to dine with Mrs. Smith, who has kindly brought me over in her brougham—and I have duty too at Highborough this afternoon."

"Are you Curate of Highborough?" enquired Emily, in merry good-humour.

"I am indeed. Isn't it strange that we should be so near each other again? I'm so delighted too, and should have liked returning with you so much: but I'll drop in, and chat some other time: I wish my time now were not so *very* limited."

Mr. Blaydes spoke these words in an undertone, and with just a little perceptible confusedness of manner, and just a few timid glances round into the church, in the direction of the rectory pew.

On their way homeward Mrs. Philip Grindstone was merrily communicative. The little episode of that morning had restored the whole party to good humour, in spite of themselves. Philip was treated by his fair wife to that portion of her history that *might* have ended, in such a way, as to have prevented her from becoming his wife at all. She had learned from Mr. Blaydes that the rector of Lowborough was absent from home; that he and his vicar had, between them, undertaken

his duties; that the vicar would officiate in the afternoon, and preach another sermon on behalf of the S.P.G.; which, he hoped, would have a better result than had been achieved that morning. Then she told Philip that the mysterious widow, in the rectory pew, was the relict of a departed tallow-chandler, who had moved, a few years before, from his close and odoriferous premises in a neighbouring manufacturing town, to the sylvan shades of Highborough House. The fair Emily added, that it was of course impossible, her husband should suppose there could have been any friendly intimacy, between the two houses, in her maiden days—that gentle people, as her father and mother were, would scarcely be likely to trouble the parties, who had taken Highborough House, with their friendly visits —that she believed that the widow had been left rather well off, but knew very little about her, as the two were not even on speaking terms.

"But what I want to know, Emily, is this: —Why did your friend, the Curate, appear to be so awfully afraid of the venerable party in the Rectory pew? Where was the harm of your chatting with him, as you did, and of what awful sin would he have been guilty, if you and I had persuaded one of our fair friends here to take compassion on him? Why should he have turned, in that frightened way, towards that old woman?"

"My dear, he knew that she was thinking of his sermon, and he didn't want her meditations upon it to be interrupted. At least I suppose so. He is a thoroughly good young man."

"But need a thoroughly good young man look so much alarmed, when one suggested to him, that possibly, we might find a thoroughly good young woman to keep him company?"

Just then the carriage dashed into the Lowborough grounds.

CHAPTER IX.

TOO LATE.

On this very same hot Sunday in July there were scenes in St. Mark's Church and Rectory, Lowchester, of a very different nature from those related in the last chapter. One of God's warriors was in the iron grasp of an enemy, from whose prowess two only of human kind have been privileged to flee, and, in the church, you could see that the congregation were restless and agitated; many of

them impulsively tearful, as ever and anon, while the officiating clergyman conducted the service, the memory forced itself upon them that a battle was being waged in the neighbouring Parsonage, that could scarcely end without bringing a gloom over the whole parish, which they would very thankfully have averted.

The effect of over much sorrow and anxiety on the frame of *any* man, is to bring upon it a premature age, weakness, and decay of the vital powers. And when that sorrow and anxiety have continued for long years, the strain upon the system becomes so great that it loses its elasticity, and power to recover the more or less healthy tone, to which it was once strung up. And then the end is nigh. If some hidden disease has been for a number of years preying upon a man, there comes a time when the constitution, so long undermined, cannot but succumb at last. If there has existed a strain upon the mind for years,

the time comes when no remedy can be effectual in its removal. A year before—it may be even a month before—some happy change, in the sufferer's circumstances, might have been the means of his complete recovery. But, there is a point, beyond which that recovery is hopeless. Then the mind, or the body, or both together, give way—often very quickly—and one more intellect is wrecked, or one more spirit released from the burden of the flesh.

I wish to intensify these thoughts. It would be well for us, could we sometimes take in human pain, or human sorrow, not in its own absolute oneness, but in the connexion with it of other circumstances. I am free to express my firm conviction, that if those who have the power to relieve the said sorrow, or anxiety, could be morally compelled to do their duty, the result would be the lengthening out of the lives of their weaker brethren. But in order that this may

be, that hideous, but costly Moloch of Self must be degraded from the status of an idol, to that of a living sacrifice. Around that idol—in many a patrician—yes, and in many a plebeian home also—treasures are heaped, for its carnal gratification, that might, if they were distributed over a wider space, prove to be the physical or moral salvation of numbers who pine away and die, and go beforehand, in many a sad case, to the Judgment-Seat—awaiting there the arrival of some powerful neighbour, who did not act the part of the Good Samaritan to his wounded brother-man, but, engrossed in his worship of Self, passed him coldly—perhaps, even superciliously—by. And when that neighbour reaches the same Judgment-Seat, and the charge is brought against him, that he had been a faithless steward—that he had wasted God's money in greedy parsimony, or on his own carnal delights, while his poorer neighbour lay perishing in the road hard by, to whose needs that

faithless steward of God ought, in the discharge of his solemn duty to his Lord, to have ministered, how will he avert it? Engrossed in Self upon earth, how can he enter then upon the glories of that land, in which Self is for all eternity laid prostrate at the foot of The Great White Throne? Oh usurers, whose chief thirst is for ten per cent., on the securities of a perishing world, pause and ask in the light of The Great Book if it would not be better—safer, in every way—to distribute largely of your wealth, to those charities of The Very Master, of whose wealth you were made stewards, *not* to pander to your own ease and luxury, but to follow in His Footsteps and do good! And, oh! you who spend thousands a year upon your wines and delicates, halt! Know you not that multitudes may rise against you by-and-bye, and prove you to be dishonest to your trust, in that the poor perished at your very gates, because heaven's trust-money, committed to

your responsible charge, was spent, not on the supply of their needs, but on your own superfluities? Turn aside the sharpened edge of the sacred moralist's weapon, if you will—here upon earth. After that the bank, and the title deeds, and the houses and lands, and a hundred luxuries not to be named here, have been given up, for the coffin, and the winding sheet, a firmer hand may hold the weapon against you; and then shall the iron enter into your very souls, and Wrath be upon you, to the uttermost.

Walter Nichols lay upon his death-bed. He was not an old man. He was undergoing a slow process of murder, before his time, by lay-impropriation, and lay-apathy. For many a long year he had mountains of difficulties to contend against:—and he had done his utmost to surmount them, but disappointments crowded thickly about his path, and the rich men, who knew of his trials, discussed him over their wine, and shrugged their

shoulders at the mention of them, but their money (money not their own, but their God's) was too precious to them to be spent upon *his* breaking health, and slackened energies, and burthened mind. They had a hundred excuses for holding aloof from him—every one of which is weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary. They *pitied* him, they *hoped* he would surmount his difficulties, but no hands and hearts were banded together to thrust them out of his path, that the man of God might go forth, freed from this world's pecuniary cares, and do his arduous work. Walter Nichols had toiled for his wife and children, and for the souls' health of rich and poor. He had sought to love all; even those whose apathy—though they knew his sufferings and his aims—had wounded him to the heart's core. He might have lived thirty years longer — had he met with sympathy in the place of cruel neglect, but he was dying at last, and even thankful to die. And then

the loving woman, who had wrought with him, side by side, and had stayed him up, with her woman's love, as long as she could, was interrupted in her ministrations to the dying one, by pressing enquiries as to his health, by the very men whose agency might have spared him to her for years. Oh the hollow mockeries and shams of this miserable world! So forward with pretentious words! So backward, in really self-denying, helpful deeds! So attentive to proprieties, that cost it only the vain breath of the lips; but to be aroused, only on the Judgment Day, to the sense that a father's and a pastor's funeral could have been prevented, had they stepped into that father's and pastor's home, years before, and given their gold instead of shoulder-shruggings and base neglect! When will the rich man learn, that, through money spent on utterly unnecessary luxuries, or stored up, to an utterly unnecessary extent, for his heirs, a portion of which, devoted to a brother-man's

welfare, would have saved him from ruin or death, he may, one day, when he too is in an agony, which no money can alleviate, hear an accusation, akin to that which sounded from Heaven in the ears of Cain—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the ground?"

Walter Nichols had been in more youthful days tall in stature, and strong and athletic in frame. Few tongues wagged against him, during his entire life in the ministry, except those of the world's devoted children, who charged him with the crime of being poor, as a consequence of having married the chosen one of his heart, who had been herself without dower or portion, rather than marry for money. Will the world dare to bring that charge against him, when its own treasures shall be moth-eaten, and its wealth a vain, unprofitable dream?

Frank had been sent for, early in the morning of this sad day, by the dying man's special

request. He loved him tenderly as a son, and wished, once more, to lie and look into the face, and press the hand of one so noble in the heraldry of Heaven, before the change came. And, surely, it would have pierced the hearts of not a few, with compunction, and remorse, to have seen how eagerly the departing minister stretched forth both his hands towards his friend, when he obeyed the summons, and silently mingled with the wife and children round the bed.

"Frank, Frank—forgive me, I can't call you by any other name—come close to me; give me your hand; nay, let me kiss you. There; the sight of you does me good. It is better than medicine! Oh! if all the world had been to me as you have been, I think I might not have stood so near the better country thus soon, and Jenny and the boys and girls—eh, God be with them!—Jenny and the boys and girls might have had me a little longer with them. Frank, you'll look

at them sometimes? You don't think I ask too much? No, I know you don't. I can't say what you are to me. You are more than my son in the faith. We shall have such a bright meeting by-and-bye. Oh, Frank, put down your head! There, God Almighty bless you! Let my hands rest there. God bless thee, my son! God brighten thy path here, and give thee to me for ever hereafter!"

Frank knelt reverently down, and all there noticed how convulsed he was, as the thin, poor, palsy-stricken hands rested on his own bowed head. He was not above the pressure upon him of a priest's blessing, though that priest was one of little note among the narrow-hearted, and the shallow-pated, and the grovelling beings who could wound his ultra-sensitive spirit by cold looks, and cold tones, and malign smiles, when he met them, and would have saluted them as brothers in Christ, but that, as he marked their demeanour towards him, he became proud, and distant

too, and passed them by, in wonder that so much cruelty could be shown, towards one who, in heart, and life, and energy, was spending, and being spent, that his much-hindered ministry might bear some fruit.

A few moments afterwards, when Frank had risen again, and was sitting very near to him, looking at him with strange emotion and affection, such as are generated only in the self-denying giver's heart by the consciousness that he had done good, Mr. Nichols turned to his wife.

"Jenny, love," he said, "I have kept right few secrets from you, and now is not the time to do so. You won't wonder at my wish to go? Any way, it can't be helped; but you won't think me cruel, if I say I am glad to go? I leave you without fear."

Then, turning to Frank, he said—

"But a few months since I had your—"

"*Don't* speak about that, sir."

"But I must. But a few months ago I

had your—well, you know what—and I wanted to tell you that, before I came to bed, I paid all my debts with it—every one. I thought it was all too late, and so said Buchanan, I understand; didn't he, Jenny? But they wouldn't accept my proposal of life-insurance. Oh, Frank, how bold a dying man can be when he knows he is leaving his darlings!"

"My dear friend, take heart. Don't fear at all. Don't entertain a shadow of fear, Mrs. Nichols, and your children shall be *my* charge."

A bright smile mantled over, with the light of the better country, the thin, wan face of the pastor, as he leant back against the raised pillows, and softly murmured his complete content.

"There are ten of them, Frank. My two eldest will make their way. They are good lads, and want to be clergymen too. God bless you, Cyril and Tom! Follow out your

wishes. You will be poor, but perhaps make many rich. But the girls—eh, Jessie and Emily, and Jenny and Mary, you'll miss—"

"My husband, you mustn't talk thus. I have not the least fear for anyone of us. Don't fr—et—"

And then the poor wife sank down exhausted, and hid her face, and there was silence in the room, broken only by the sound of sobs.

Then, after a while, the dying man gathered strength, and spoke again.

"Ask my old friend Philip Deverel to bury me, Frank. He has a heart. He's like yourself. He values money, only as a means of doing good. Jenny would like it dearly. And, perhaps, he'll say a word or two to my people next Sunday. I know they may think me weak, but I should have been longer with them, perhaps, if they had sympathised with me more. There are many of them, whose only thoughts seem to be about money. You'll write to Deverel for Jenny, won't you, Frank?"

"Anything you wish."

The strength with which the dying man spoke was wonderful. Though the flow of his words was much hindered, by pain and weakness, so that, occasionally, they were almost inaudible, it yet seemed as though the departing spirit, in those last few hours of its sojourn in the wreck of a body, in which it had been accustomed to command, found means to divest the burthened mind of some of its clouds, and to galvanise into some sort of expression the failing tongue. As he spoke the words last given, voices were heard below, and a servant presently entered with the intelligence that the service was over, and that the curate, with Dr. Buchanan, Mr. Wright, Mr. Cameron, and Mr. Badger, had called. Frank could see that Mrs. Nichols was thoroughly unfit to see the visitors, and he, at once, offered to go down in her place—to her great relief.

The doctor and the curate went up-stairs into the sick room, and left the other gentle-

men together. It is utterly needless to say that they all felt the situation keenly.

"Ah, Frank! you here! Well, how is he now?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"He may live till sunset, perhaps."

All looked silently, but very mournfully, into the speaker's face.

"Dear—dear me! What may be his age, Mr. Grindstone?" asked Mr. Badger.

"I can't say, Badger. He may be fifty-five; I don't think he can be more."

"No, not more," assented the other two gentlemen.

"Well now, Frank," began Mr. Wright, "it's of no use our blinking the truth, that our poor friend is going, and I can't tell you how it shocks me to think of it. I haven't rested at night, for nearly a week, for thinking of him. I've noticed, for a year or two past, that he has been breaking—but, you know, one doesn't dwell upon such things, in an active life like mine. However, that's neither here nor there. We want to do some-

thing in the matter, if we can; if there is any way in which we can be made useful. Can you suggest anything?"

Frank could have told the speaker, that he had given a promise to the departing pastor, in the dying chamber, that those he loved, and left behind him, should be thrown into no pecuniary anxiety through his death. He could have spoken of his own intention to make provision for the widow, and the fatherless, and then those present would have lauded him to the skies; but, on these topics, he held his peace.

"I know, for a fact, that his affairs are not in the most flourishing possible position," was Mr. Badger's added item of experience, and, as he gave it, Frank's brow grew dark, and there was a slightly perceptible curl of the lip —nothing more.

"We cannot undo *the past*," returned Frank, with a meaning look at Badger, at which he thought that gentleman turned just a little pale. But the circumstance might,

perhaps, have been accounted for in fifty ways.

"His—his—you know what I mean, Frank—it will involve great expense, won't it?" remarked Mr. Wright.

"Most certainly."

"Well, now, don't you think we might manage, amongst us, to relieve that anxiety?" suggested Mr. Wright again.

Frank felt just then, that if, on a certain occasion, of which he had heard, Mr. Wright, as one of the wealthy partners of a local bank, had not firmly, though blandly, refused Mr. Nichols a loan, on the ground that it was beneath the dignity of that establishment (not exactly so expressed) to accede to such small applications, the sensitive spirit of the then dying clergyman would have received one less wound—a wound that had eaten like a canker into his energies, and had given him darker views of life, and of his fellow men. He was almost on the eve of replying, in short, sar-

castic, caustic words, as to the superior charity involved, in helping *the living spirit* to bear its burden, to that which takes thought for the decent sepulture of *the dead body*, which the sinfully-neglected spirit would be thankful to vacate—but Mr. Wright was his friend, and he spared him.

All this time Mr. Cameron sat silently on the couch, looking up intently into Frank's face, and watching the play of his features. At last he, too, spoke—rather tremulously.

"Frank," he said, "I want to ask you a plain question. Do you mind telling us—in confidence—what you personally have done in this matter?"

Frank coloured, and turned to his friend, as he replied, "Excuse me, my dear Cameron, if I say that I really cannot answer your question. You won't press it?"

Mr. Cameron rose, and grasped his hand, as he said, "I am sorry I ever asked it; but I know what you are. We will keep our small matter to ourselves, and not ask you to join us."

"Thanks."

"Then suppose we adjourn to my house, Wright. Badger, will you come too? And, Frank, will you ask the doctor to join us when he comes down stairs?"

And so they separated. Almost as soon as they had left, the doctor entered the room. He looked very sorrowful.

"Frank," he said—they all knew him so well, and loved him so much, that they could not be formal towards him—"it is as I feared. Poor Nichols has been helped *sadly too late.* If he had met with generous sympathy, but a year or two ago, he might have been with us for years longer. A year or two ago, he was still a sound man. Now, even if we could bring him through this illness—and that is impossible—his life could not be looked upon as certain, from one moment to another. He has been worried—literally worried—to death."

That night the living of St. Mark's became vacant.

CHAPTER X.

"As if a morning in June, with all its music, and sunshine,
Suddenly paused in the sky."

LONGFELLOW'S "Evangeline."

NEARLY a year passed away, and again it was early summer. Lowborough looked much as it had ever done, except that Philip had improved, and rendered more picturesque the grounds—especially in front of his house. As if tired of the dead level of the landscape, he had imported multitudes of cart loads of soil on to the estate, wherewith he had constructed hillocks, and turfed, and flowered, and

shrubbed them over. Then it had evidently seemed to him, that the prospect from his drawing-room, and library windows, might still farther be improved, by the introduction of an artificial sheet of water. And he had succeeded in constructing a somewhat extensive pool, and a watercourse, modelled after some natural lake he had seen, with a studied shapelessness, a jagged, zigzag sort of outline, such as he, and the master spirits employed upon the work, had imagined to be the best possible counterfeit of artless Nature. Rustic bridges spanned the narrow channels. Little islands dotted here and there the broader reservoir. There were broad-leaved water-lilies, and a pair of majestic swans, and a gaily painted boat, and boat-house. So that Lowborough looked its very best.

And, within the mansion there, had been a great home-festival, on the occasion of the baptism of the young heir, who had recently made his appearance on the scene; and, if

the doctor's opinion could be trusted, gave good promise of meeting the battle of life with a well-knit frame, and in good spirit. Three months before, the marriage of Frank and Marion had taken place, and they were now staying with Philip and Emily, after having acted as sponsors for their little relative. The differences between the two brothers had been happily smoothed over. To do him justice, Philip was not one who would be likely to cherish, for any great length of time, the bitterness which had taken root in his heart, on the occasion of Frank's refusal to officiate as "best man" at his marriage. He had developed into your ordinary country gentleman, was popular with his neighbours, lived fully up to his income, prided himself on the breed of his horses, kept a liberal table, frequently gave dinner parties, and occasionally enriched with his piece of gold the offertories in his parish church. But he was nothing more than your ordinary rich layman.

He had no such sense of the heavy responsibilities, attached to the possession of wealth, as his brother Frank had. He did subscribe a guinea or two a year, to this society and that, without having any definite ideas, as to the work of the said societies, but would at any time have withdrawn his subscriptions, and helped thereby to throw any society overboard, if self-interest had called upon him, with its Siren voice, to make extra financial exertions in another direction. It was respectable, gentlemanly, quite *en régle* to give; and he published it to the world that he *did* give. Deep down in his heart of hearts, he venerated his elder brother, and looked upon him as a superior being; and, deep down in his heart of hearts, he lacked that sense of happiness, and peace, which his elder brother had, to an extent not easily described. He played the part of "Mr. Worldly-Wiseman" to perfection, and had few sympathies in common with the "Great-Heart" who was born under the same roof with him.

In his domestic relationship, however, Philip became, in the course of a little while, a happier man. For some time Emily kept perpetually sounding in his ears the praises of another hero. She had not as yet promoted her husband to the pedestal of heroism; but he bore her depreciation of his deserts, in tolerable good-humour, and, in due course of time, through the unconscious instrumentality of Mr. Frederick Augustus Blaydes himself, the hero aforesaid, his forbearance met with its due reward. For, whereas that gentleman had been again and again, in Emily's pettish moments, held up to her lord and master, as a pattern of fidelity and disinterestedness in his affections, as a man who had a very high ideal of what a lover should be to his mistress, and a husband to his wife, till, now and then, Philip turned on his heel, and was a little disrespectful, in his thoughts and words, as to the said marvel among the male kind, there came, to his extreme delectation, a change over Emily on this subject. And thus it was.

Probably, but for the evidence of her own eyesight, she would have been most slow to believe, that her hero could have fallen, as he did, from the height to which she had exalted him, but that evidence, happily for Philip, was granted her. It had happened, in the course of things, that Philip had fallen out with his groom, and wanted to engage another in his place. A rumour to this effect reached the servants' hall at Highborough House, and brought therefrom Mr. Patrick Jennings, who was at the time Mrs. Smith's groom, but had had the misfortune to displease that lady, and to receive notice from her. The man had said, in reply to Philip's very natural enquiry into the cause of his dismissal—

"Why, you see, sir, missus is that fractious, since it's got abroad that she's a goin' to get married, that we servants doesn't know how to put up with her no how. She's ready to snap our noses off sometimes, if we do but speak to her. And one day I up and tould her, that

one of her 'osses was a wantin' the farrier at him, an' she up and tould me that there wasn't nothing the matter with the 'os; and that I knowed there wasn't; or else, if there was, it was all my fault for neglectin' on him. Now, sir, if you'll ask any o' the genelmen about here, they'll all tell you that whatever other grooms may do, Pat Jennings does *his* dooty by the 'osses, and 's up to none o' their nasty tricks with 'em. An' so it weighed on my mind, an' I ventered to tell her a little plain about it (you see, sir, the 'oss was an old un and was gettin' blind); an' for that same, I got my warnin'."

"Oh! And your mistress is going to be married, is she?" Philip had said, in reply. "Rather late in life, isn't it? Do you know to whom? I hadn't heard of it."

"Lord bless you, sir! but no—I don't suppose you would have heerd on it very ready, for they've tried to keep it very saycret, an' nobody might ha' knowed about it, if

minister's missis's maid hadn't blabbed it out, as they wimmen will, to one of our wimmen servants. Why she's goin' to marry the parson to be sure."

"The parson! What parson?"

"Why, t'young un, sir."

"Mr. Blaydes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know when?"

"I did hear it was next Thursday as ever is to be."

"Well, my man, I think you'll suit me. But you can't come till after the wedding, I suppose?"

"Yes, I can, sir, cos I've heerd it's to be a walkin' fun—I mean, they're to walk to church, sir."

"I wish you'd find out for me, from the parish clerk, the day and the hour, and leave word at the lodge," Philip had said.

Patrick succeeded in getting correctly at the desired information, and on receipt of it

through the lodge-keeper, Philip arranged that the carriage should be at the door, so as to take Emily and himself past Highborough Church. And at the church gates a motley crowd of villagers had collected, from whom, artfully affecting ignorance as to the cause of their being there, Philip learned that Mrs. Smith was then and there becoming Mrs. Blaydes. Then it was *his* turn to talk. The newly married pair were seen by them to issue from the church porch, before the carriage was out of sight of it. Emily witnessed the scene, and Philip's triumph over the *quondam* hero, to his great glee and satisfaction at the time, and his comfort afterwards, was complete ; his fair wife having been so disgusted on the occasion that she looked up even tearfully into her husband's eyes, and declared he should never hear the name of Blaydes from her lips again. She kept her promise too, and seemed, thenceforth, to subside into a mood of tacit resignation to

her conviction, that her ideal of a hero was one impossible of realization.

It was a lovely evening towards the close of the month of June. Its earlier days had been characterized by that barometrical fickleness to which they are often subject, but now Nature seemed to have finally shaken hands with the Spring, and to have given herself up to her other brighter, more fascinating admirer. Emily was in the house, in attendance on the new master of it, to whom, for the time, his father was content to regard himself as only second in importance. Marion, Frank, and Philip had been lured out into the grounds, by the bright glow of the sunset, and the mellifluous flow of bird-song, that had streamed into the house through the wide open door. Along the new walks by the side of the water, over the little bridges, and among the artificial mounds, they wound their way—Marion between the two gentlemen. Before her marriage, the flow of her life had been not a little darkened and impeded.

Now it was like a clear musical streamlet, ever basking in the sunlight. Once, in her deep, but hidden love for Philip, she had thought, that her days would pass away drearily, and sunlessly, without him. Now, walking close to the fond, true, noble heart of his brother, she could look up into the face of Philip, on the other side of her, inwardly grateful that her secret had never betrayed itself to him through her lips, and grateful, too, that Providence had thwarted her earlier fancies, and had given to her a husband whom she loved more and more daily, as the fruit of her observation of his sterling qualities of heart, and of the consistent tenor of his life. They were leaning over one of the rustic bridges, looking at the swans as they glided, after their royally majestic fashion, round the islet, on which was their terrene habitation, and, as they did so, Marion turned round towards the house, the front windows of which were all aglow with the reflected sunset.

"Philip," she said to him, quietly, "you have, indeed, a charming home, and ought to be a very happy man. You can botanize in these woods, and pleasure grounds, to your heart's content; you have a soul for music, and such a scene as this ought to make a poet of you."

"H'm; if you were not a lady, Marion, I could quote for you the words of the Roman bard, from which you would see into what heresy you have fallen. 'A poet,' he says, to put his sentiment into an English dress, 'is a poet by birth, not by training.' But give me some *bouts rimés* by-and-bye, when we go in, and I'll try what I can do—'breeze,' 'trees,' 'splash,' 'dash'—and that sort of thing; you know. I think neither Frank nor I ever tried rhyming."

"Philip! I beg your pardon! A wife, perhaps, is not very well qualified to be a critic of her husband's effusions, but I look upon Frank as a *born* poet."

"No! then what a sly dog he must have been to hide it from me."

"If I had been *born* a poet, Phil, you must have found it out before this. Our old haunts would have been littered with stray papers; I should have sported long hair, or have acquired a habit of looking distraught. No; I'm only a rhymester; but latterly—I suppose because I'm happier—I don't know any other cause for it—I have been more than ever given to versifying."

"Ah! I know. It's a poetical time, you know, Marion. I wish you'd let me see some of your effusions—but, Marion, don't you think this habit of his accounts for his being so little practical?"

"So little practical, Philip!" returned Marion, with heightened colour, and a proud, loving look into her husband's face. "I think my husband is practical in the very highest and best sense of the word."

She seemed to be always on the watch to

espouse her husband's cause, against the detracting tongues of the men of the world. They could not cast so much as a passing cloud over his fair fame, but she had acquired an idea that his fellow men had condescended to pity him and herself, after their wordly-wise fashion, because he studied themselves so little in the expenditure of his means.

"My dear Marion," returned Philip, "I think I am acquainted with *one* meaning only of the word 'practical'—you may know several. I haven't 'Johnson' by me, but I should imagine he would bear me out in my notion that it means to refer to a wise, prudent, calculating way of doing things—"

"Doubtless, Philip; and Frank is wise, prudent, and calculating."

"In the use he makes of his money?—when you take into consideration that he is married—and that, by-and-bye, events may arise, which will make him regret his excessive good nature?"

"You don't understand him; you don't stand on the same level with him; you don't breathe the same air with him."

"Marion, my darling! Never mind! Let us change the subject."

Frank could see that his beautiful wife was getting warm.

"I have no right whatever to criticize him, in any way, as to the use he makes of his money. It's no affair of mine. But I can't help feeling hurt, that, when he might have invested that twenty thousand in that splendid and really most profitable undertaking Badger told us of, and have done so much for you, and himself thereby, he should have taken it into his head to do that other thing with it —pull down Icicle Lodge, and put up and furnish that great unsightly-looking building in its place."

"It isn't so very much unlike your own house either, Philip," returned Marion, laughing.

"No, it isn't; you're right enough there. But you see there's no park with it—nothing but rows of dingy little houses. Now Badger said the other day that if he had cleared some of his ground of such lumber and put up some really good villa residences in their room they would have paid him better."

"You wander a little from the point, Philip," interrupted Frank. "You know my object in pulling down Icicle Lodge and putting up that house in its room. The rents of those houses are paid with tolerable regularity, and will serve to keep the new house going."

The fact is that Frank, soon after the death of the rector of St. Mark's, had set himself to think how best he could benefit the widow and family, and yet allow the lady to feel her dependence upon him as little as possible. Icicle Lodge had always been an eye-sore to him. He could not glance at its dirty-looking walls without thinking of his uncle. They

were remembrancers to him of ungodly greed, of cold, cruel, rapacious money-grubbing, which in his heart of hearts he *detested* in right good earnest. Mr. Nichols had often spoken to him about the number of poor widows in his parish, whose lot was of the loneliest, and their fare of the scantiest. Some of them were relicts of men, by whose financial failure, and ruin, his uncle had made his money, and who had given way under their fallen fortunes and died, or in other cases, after a heathenish fashion, had drunk themselves to death. His deliberations on the subject, and consultations with Marion, ended in his determination to pull down the hated building, and erect in place of it a large, plain house, which should be furnished throughout in comfortable style as a widows' home. The dormitories in the house were to be small, so as to give each widow privacy if she wished to retire from the sitting-room which was common to all. A small chapel was contrived within the build-

ing, and a considerable portion of it set aside for the use of a lady whose services he would engage as superintendent. This latter post he offered to Mrs. Nichols, feeling that as she had long known and been interested in many of those who would be admitted into the home, she was the very one to put in charge of their welfare. This charge, together with a suitably furnished portion of the house, and such salary as a lady would expect, he offered to his rector's widow, and, it is needless to say, she accepted it, thankfully appreciating the graceful way in which he fulfilled his promise thereby to study her worldly welfare, and also filled her mind, and her hands, with a responsible and remunerative employment. This was the undertaking at which some few money-lovers cavilled, but on account of which Marion's love for her noble-hearted husband was increased tenfold.

Philip Grindstone either *could not* see, or pertinaciously refused to see, that money laid

out largely and liberally towards God was wisely, prudently, or practically laid out. He had little belief in other than terrestrial securities. He found it necessary to close his eyes to the teachings of the very highest of all printed authorities on the subject. He *dared not* question those teachings; he only turned and twisted his conscience into silently ignoring them. His ideas as to the claims upon his purse of his church's work were of the most limited kind. He decidedly was not the man to "sell all that he had and give to the poor." And are not very many, to whom their banker's account is of far more importance than their Bibles, singularly like him in this respect? Philip would scarcely have confessed that the case was thus bad with him. He was one of the men who, for respectability's sake, in a great measure, give in a lukewarm adhesion to the Scriptures and the Church, without the consciousness troubling their dreams at night that the said adhesion is luke-

warm; but the Scriptures and the Church are not to interfere with ten per cent. and worldly luxuries, and miserly contributions to charities, well advertised in the local papers, under pain of being regarded as—unfashionable, suited only to times long since gone by.

Therefore Marion's words were quite true. Philip did *not* understand Frank; did not stand on the same level, did not breathe the same air with him.

Hereafter he will wish it had been otherwise.

There are two realms in which ten per cent. and terrestrial securities and multiplied houses and lands, and luxury, and apathy towards sorrow and suffering, and flimsy excuses for parsimony, are thought of as the world's favoured ones do not think of them now. In the one realm there is joy that, with "the Mammon of unrighteousness" in their hands, its possessors went about for their master's sake, and did good—after no lukewarm, self-deceiving, pretentious fashion. In the other

realm, the hatred of gold is equalled only by that which Satan feels for the soul of man.

Frank, Marion, and Philip lingered in the grounds that evening till the air began to grow a little damp and chilly, and the flowers, longing for their night potations of dew, began to be satisfied. They might even have staid longer still, but there came a messenger from the house to them in the shape of the nurse.

When an elderly woman of grave demeanour, in personal appearance the very reverse of Pharaoh's lean kine, and a little smitten with asthma, is seen rushing towards you with such unwonted speed that before she reaches you she presses her fat hands firmly against her heart, and when she reaches you jerks out her first words spasmodically, you will not require to be told that she has news to communicate of rather a startling nature.

"Oh! Lord! Oh! my gracious goodness. Oh! sir," were the messenger's first words.

"What's the matter? Is it the baby? Is

it your mistress?" asked Philip, in not a little consternation.

"No, sir, it isn't the baby, bless him! It's the missis! Oh, dear! She would see him! It aint no fault o' mine—that it aint!"

"See whom? Speak, for God's sake, woman!"

"Why, the bailiff, sir; him as you took on from some place i' the north!"

"Yes, I know. Well, what then?"

"Oh, Lord, sir, I've no breath left to tell you! He's waitin' up yonder! Ah, ma'am, well I did dream last night about the house shakin', and bein' all under water—water in the cellars, water up to the front door steps, water a washin' through the hall—like a flood! Oh! whativer— !"

"While you're talking such rubbish as that, you might have told me all about it. Where *is* the bailiff?"

"In the liberrary, sir."

At these words Philip ran towards the house, while Mrs. Quickett, the nurse, sat down on one of the garden seats, and panted for breath, and Frank and Marion stood by.

CHAPTER XI.

CAN IT BE HE?

It was only natural that Philip, on having ascertained, from the disjointed sentences and agitated manner of Mrs. Quickett, that his wife had been terribly agitated in some way, by mysterious intelligence communicated to her through the bailiff of the estate, should first hasten to discover the exact nature of her condition. He had left her in remarkably lively spirits. She would gladly have joined

them in the grounds, but that her boy had made demands upon her sole attention to himself, which she could not resist. Fancy was very busy with Philip's brain, during his progress to his wife's room. Had she heard of her father's death? That, in the sequel of it, would be rather an advantage to them than not. He hated himself, for the moment, as it crossed him that such might possibly be the nature of the catastrophe that had occurred, and that, if so, the event would increase their financial prosperity. And yet he reflected that such news would scarcely be likely to reach her through the agency of the new bailiff, a man who had been an utter stranger to the place, before Philip had brought him to it a few weeks previously, from the north, where, though an Englishman, he had acted in a similar capacity in the service of a southern gentleman, who had estates in that locality. Such news would surely have reached them through a telegram,

and that would have been sent directly to none other than himself. Then—ridicule it as he did—that old wife's dream, as she had related it, clung to him, and haunted him. Why should the silly old thing have been fancying at all that the house was under water? Oh! she had been thinking its situation was damp! Or she had been looking out towards the pool, while she imbibed her extra strong glass of gin-and-water that night, before going to bed! The water in the grounds had been the last thing she had seen, and it had assumed horribly-exaggerated development, and played pranks with her in her sleep. So reasoned *the philosopher*, but a prophetic feeling of distrust, in his quickly-conceived reasonings, haunted *the man*.

He gained the room, at last, in which his wife was, and found it in a state of not a little confusion. Several of the servants, observing the state of the nurse, had rushed up to it to render assistance. Emily was in a swoon on

the couch, out of which every effort was being made to recover her. The baby had been roused from his peaceful slumbers, and was revenging himself for the indignity offered him, upon the company assembled, in a storm of passion, which, in their anxiety to resuscitate their mistress, the servants made only comparatively feeble efforts to allay; such attempts as they did make being signally unsuccessful. Restored at last to consciousness, amid sights and sounds that imparted a look of wild bewilderment to her eyes, she fixed her gaze thankfully enough on her husband's face, as he bent over her. Having succeeded in gaining thus much of her attention, he dismissed the baby, and their servants, with a message to the bailiff, that he would be with him in a few minutes, and then sat down by her side, and tried to extract from her such particulars of the interview by which she had been so thoroughly discomposed, as she might feel able to give.

"You've had Somers with you, love, I hear?"

"Yes; it was that which made me so ill."

"He told you somebody had been calling upon him?"

"Yes; the man was as scared himself as ever I could have been. And, if it is as I think it must be, it certainly looks more like a resurrection than anything else."

"A resurrection! What do you mean?"

"I can't tell you now, Philip; but suppose we go down together, and hear the bailiff's story."

"Do you feel equal to the exertion?"

"Quite; if you'll let me lean a little heavily on your arm. There; now I shall manage very well."

They found the bailiff in the library. He was a man of a naturally florid complexion, one not easily rendered pale, but there was a look of troubled wonder and unrest on his face, quite suggestive of the fact that he had been confronted by a mystery of no ordinary

kind—an attack, as he thought it might be, of cranial hallucination—under the memory of which he felt by no means comfortable. He was in a deep study, and in downcast attitude, when Philip and Emily entered the room.

"Well, Somers, how are you? Now for this mystery. You, at least, will speak plainly, and to the point."

"I was in my own garden, sir, about two hours ago, looking after some climbing roses, that wanted cutting and training a little, when I saw a person come up to me through the garden gate, as though he wanted to speak. I waited till he came up, and then he asked me if Mr. Francis lived there. This made me feel that he must be a stranger, not to know that Mr. Francis had been dead some time, and that I was in his place."

"What did he look like, Somers? what was his height? how was he dressed?" asked Emily, almost in a breath.

"Well, ma'am, he was a tall, personable-

looking gentleman, with rather a large head, bushy whiskers, and beard; very much bronzed in his face, as though he'd travelled a deal in foreign parts."

"Yes; stay just a minute. I don't very well remember my uncle, but I do remember this, that papa used to say he had a mole on his left cheek. Did you notice this?"

Somers couldn't recall whether the gentleman who had visited him had, or had not, that distinguishing characteristic of his personal appearance.

"H'm; never mind. What had he to say to you?" asked Philip.

"Well, he told me that if I mentioned his name to Mrs. Grindstone, sir, she would know all about his business."

"Yes; and he gave you his name?" asked Emily, turning rather pale again, and sitting down.

"He said he was Mr. George Ashton, from Patagonia."

"Yes; there now, Philip, you are in possession of the particulars just as Somers told me them before."

"If he is the man he represents himself to be," returned Philip, feeling very much just then as he would have felt if the floor had been sinking under his feet, "then your father had no right whatever to this property, and therefore could not sell it. But the thing appears to me to be impossible. You know how very positive your father felt about his death; you remember well that evidence reached us from those parts, as to a quarrel a man named Ashton had had with the natives, in which he had lost his life. You remember, too, that the Geographical Society were positive on the point. Badger even went to one of the members of the society, and learned from him—had it down, indeed, in black and white, for Badger's a very careful fellow—that a person named Ashton had indubitably fallen in those parts. They had even received

articles of clothing marked with his name, and in one of the pockets of a coat which had been forwarded to them, there were even letters addressed to George Ashton, Esq., bearing the seal of the society upon them. Badger, you must remember, saw these articles, and was, of course, thoroughly convinced in his own mind, before the purchase of the property was entered upon. Now I cannot conceive a way out of such a mystery, except by the death of your uncle George. Look at it again;—at the tale of the death, at the place where the body was buried, at the circumstances attendant on the death, bearing out so well your uncle's so well-known quarrelsome disposition. Take in connection with this the very wearing apparel, marked with his name, and forwarded to England, together with the news of his death;—forwarded by the sailors who brought over these articles, and the news, with them, to the Royal Geographical Society's

House, *because* the light of nature led them to take these letters which they found had been actually written to him *from* that house. Really, my dear Emily, I think there must be some imposture here."

"But would it be possible, or worth any man's while to get up an impudent imposture of this kind? He would be so completely found out."

"Did you ever hear of anyone who resembled your uncle in features, or in personal appearance, who knew him well, and was in possession of facts which might help him to set up a false claim of identification?"

"Certainly not, Philip; but papa could best answer *that* question. He may have heard of such a creature, if one is in existence."

"H'm—well I shall proceed to London to your father, and to the house of the Geographical Society with as little delay as pos-

sible, but should first like to ask Somers a few more questions."

"Yes, sir."

"Did this man present any proof of his identity with Mr. George Ashton?"

"None, sir. No; he merely said that was his name; that the Lowborough property was his, and that he was going to London to have the matter seen to."

"H'm. Was he at all irritable?"

"Very much so, sir. Yes; he certainly did get very warm indeed."

"H'm—ah, well—that goes for very little, if the theory that he is an impostor be the correct one. One thing I don't like. An impostor, for the mere sake of having as many on his side as he could get, would be likely to be open-handed in shewing his asserted proof. By-the-bye, did this man tell you he had seen any of the neighbours?"

"No, sir. I don't believe he *had* seen one of them, for after he left me, I found out that

he had a conveyance which took the way, with him in it, towards Highborough Station. And in the course of conversation at first, he did say that he had come in only by the 6.10 train, and wanted to catch the last one that goes out for London. No; he couldn't have had time to see any of the neighbours."

Philip's countenance grew dark at this.

"I don't quite like his *not* seeing some of the neighbours, Somers. An impostor would have been most likely to try his luck in that way, and then vaunt to you any real or fancied success he might have had with them, in seeking to impress them with the conviction, that he is the man he pretends to be. But, at any rate, he will have to be confronted, Emily, with some of our old people, if he means to persevere in the substantiation of his claim on the estate. I should suppose that many—both men and women—must be living about here who knew your uncle?"

"Oh, yes, several. I could give you many names in a moment. Old Wilson would know him. He was gardener at the Hall in my uncle's day. And Morton, and Plummer, and Calder, and Ann Burton, and others, but I can't think of their names just now: I'm too confused. If you go to London, would it be well to take two or three of these people with you?"

"Why, my love?"

"To confront them with him."

"What? and so help to take some of the burden of proof off his hands! Oh, dear no."

"But, Philip, if it *should* be as we fear?"

"Fear, my love! I do not fear." But as he spoke the words, there was an indescribable something in his manner, and in the inflections of his voice, that *did* betray fear. And his hearers must have noticed this, if they were in the least degree observant.

"If I might presume to advise, sir," said Somers, "and things look still as awkward as at present, I could recommend to you a very hard-headed lawyer; one who has been wonderfully successful, as more than one can vouch, in his cases, many of which have been very ugly ones."

"Ah, I see! You mean one who, for a handsome fee, would condescend to prove that black is white? No, no, Somers, 'fair play's a jewel' all the world over. I don't feel disposed, at present, to entertain any very serious thoughts about the business; but if it should turn against us, we must be content."

Was Philip sincere, just then, in what he said? Or did he listen placidly to a tempting voice at his ear, suggesting—if the worst should come to the worst—unprincipled legal advisers and advocates, and suborned witnesses, as a probable road out of his dilemma?

If any whisperer of evil counsels, from the invisible region of the lost, were at his ear at this juncture, it would prove that he and his confraternity have no power of anticipating future events; as Philip found out in the sequel.

CHAPTER XII.

THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

Never did any journey to London seem to Philip so tedious in length, as was the one he undertook with the view of ascertaining whether he was master of Lowborough or not. And the hours of transit were the more leaden-footed, because an accident had happened on the line, to the previous train, by which one or two of the carriages had been broken up into splinters, and the *débris* had

to be cleared away before his train could proceed. As, while it halted, he paced impatiently up and down the platform of a little country station, situated just within sight of the ruin, his fellow passengers wondered at his apathy. When the sympathies of every one else were with those who had been more or less severely injured, and with the relatives of those who had been killed; he appeared to be so completely self-absorbed, and so childishly angry with the terrible obstacle, by which his progress to town had been delayed. He was in a state utterly unapproachable for conversation, during the entire journey. Thus far he had been sailing, at Lowborough, on the summer-sea of prosperity. The threatening clouds, which had for a while obscured the heaven of his domestic peace, had passed away, and everything appeared to be smiling favourably upon him. He had improved his estate, and had been

nursing in his heart schemes of self-aggrandizement, by which he hoped to soar higher still, into the more favored circles of the political sky. And, in a moment as it seemed to him, in the retrospect, he had been hurried on, as if by some fatal whirlwind, to the edge of a precipice, whence he might fall a ruined man, and have, for the rest of his life, spent in the vale of stern poverty, to revolve in his mind the vanity and unprofitableness of all earthly blessings,—with the keener, more biting anguish, as he compared himself, side by side, with his unselfish and unworldly brother.

But even the longest, or most hindered journey, and the most anxious state of suspense, come to an end at last.

On his arrival in London Philip hastened at once to the town-house of his father-in-law, which was situated near one of the fashionable squares, and his views of the point at issue were not the brighter when he learned that a

thunderbolt had fallen there, in the shape of the actual and identical brother himself, beyond all question, who after having been supposed to be laid to his body's last sleep on some wild Patagonian plain or moorland, had turned up, to the discomfiture of everybody concerned, except himself. So evident was it that the true possessor of Lowborough had been found, that when Philip enquired as to the existence of the mole on George Ashton's cheek, his brother Henry manifested not a little impatience thereat, and proclaimed at once his conviction that the chain of evidence sufficient for the establishment of the identification was complete in every part.

Mr. Henry Ashton said that he had been to him in *propriâ personâ* that very morning: and, despite the long absence of the brothers from each other, had requested formally of him the surrender of the title-deeds of the Lowborough property, in order that the unpleasantness of demanding them from a gen-

tleman of whom he had no knowledge, and with whom he was unwilling to come unnecessarily into hostile collision, might be spared him. "He gave me nine days," added Mr. Henry Ashton, "within which to see or to write to you. I am a ruined man, for in addition to the title-deeds, he claims, imperatively, the rental for several years past." In fact, socially speaking, a chasm of fearful dimensions had opened at the feet of both the younger Ashton, and the unlucky Philip, and both men felt as though some fatal spell were dragging them down into it.

"It's an awful, a crushing calamity," remarked Mr. Henry Ashton, adding an imprecation, in the bitterness of his soul. "To think that such an utterly improbable thing should have happened at all. How it *can* have happened I can't understand, in the very teeth of such plain proof that he *must be* dead."

"It doesn't seem *to you* to be an altogether

welcome resurrection from the dead," remarked Philip, smiling in spite of himself, notwithstanding the unenviable position in which he found himself placed.

"Welcome! No, the fellow is, I should say, a thorough Patagonian all over. He has lost all the trace he once had of anything like English manners, or English generosity. He's an unmitigated—why he's crossing the street—to make a call now! Will you face him?"

The two gentlemen were standing together at one of the drawing-room windows facing the street, and commanding an unhindered view of the passers-by. As his father-in-law spoke, Philip looked eagerly out, and perceived a tall, ungainly figure, accoutred in habiliments considerably the worse for wear, making for the front door of the house, with strides, that suggested at once to his mind, not a little successful practice in the accomplishment of pedestrian feats. His knock was a single one,

but it reverberated through the house, with an echo suggestive of a Patagonian giant, armed with a leaden-headed stick of immoderate weight, being on the street-side of the ill-used door. The countenance of the man who proceeded to obey the summons, was one worthy of study by the physiognomist. It presented a curious mixture of consternation, dismay, confusedness, and conscious imbecility. On the entrance of the visitor, he stepped aside with a touch of humility not often to be noticed in the flunkey world, while the tall, broad-backed, loud-voiced stranger made his way, without further introduction, into the drawing-room.

He was a much finer man than his brother, and though, as he looked at you, shadows flitted across his face, that gave to it a decidedly forbidding aspect, yet when the play of its muscles was still, it wore a frank, open look, which, taken in connexion with the

gentleman's high forehead, suggested that if he was a bear, he was yet one that *might* be tamed!

He gave a hearty stare at Philip, and then wiped his perspiring face—it was a hot day—and sat down, uninvited, on a chair that, being of slender construction, creaked dismally under his weight.

"This gentleman, George, is my son-in-law; and the one to whom I sold the Lowborough property," explained Mr. Henry Ashton, with as much self-possession as he could muster for the occasion.

"Your son-in-law, eh—married Emily then, I suppose, did he? Well, sir, I hope my niece is well."

As the speaker turned towards him, Philip raised his eyes to his face; and, upon it, saw at once the unmistakeable mole.

"Well, you know, Harry, you've brought him and yourself too into a nice mess. You'd

no business to have acted as you have done, without first scouring land and sea, to learn where I was hanging out."

"But report reached us—report very well founded—as it seemed then—to the effect that you were dead and buried."

Thereat Mr. Ashton, senr., laughed aloud, a portentous, ear-cracking laugh; and then the hue of his countenance changed.

"Report! Well, what of that? How far it was well-founded, you're the best judge. I suppose you don't doubt my being your brother now?"

Mr. Henry protested that decidedly he did not.

"Ah! it's awkward you and this gentleman didn't know the stern, unpleasant fact of my existence, before you both did silly things, and played so prettily at buying and selling properties. No doubt you both wish my body had been a barrel full of salt water, or that

those Patagonian fellows *had* knocked me on the head; but you see they were better behaved. I could stalk across the country on foot, or back a horse, or throw a man as well as most of 'em; so, on the whole, they thought, I suppose, that they'd better let me alone."

"But, George, I can't, for the life of me, understand all this mystery. Of course, my dear fellow, I'm profoundly relieved to see you, when all of us thought you were in Kingdom Come, you know—but, perhaps, you're not aware that the Royal Geographical Society, have in their possession, distinct and unequivocal proofs that you are dead: and yet here you are alive—you, or your double."

"Proofs be hanged, and doubles too, and hypocrisy at the back of 'em," returned the hearty traveller, in emphatic tones. "You don't persuade me that you're glad to see me back—of course you *can't be*. You and I

never did agree as boys. I've given you many a well-deserved licking, Harry; and we're not likely to agree any better as men."

"But was that your coat that was brought to England?"

"Nobody else's. My name was upon it."

"And letters inside addressed to you?"

Here the traveller looked as though he were busy recalling the past, a little annoyed as he did so.

"H'm; they were in it too, were they? Well, happily they were of no importance. But it was very careless in me not to have taken care of 'em."

"But that coat, and those letters were said distinctly to have belonged to some traveller who had fallen out with the natives, and—got the worst of it. And this too seemed so likely to be you—"

"Thank you, Harry. You've a high opinion of me," returned his brother.

"You know you are, like me, a passionate fellow, George; and you used to be the worst of the two, I think."

"H'm; very likely. But what has that to do with the present matter?"

"We thought it might have brought you into the trouble, in which you met with your—. Confound it! I was going to say—your death. And, in the face of these proofs, why the dickens ain't you dead?"

The position in which Mr. Henry Ashton stood was confessedly one whose embarrassment cannot easily be estimated; but this *rencontre* with his brother, and the mysteries connected with it, so puzzled and confused him, at present, that he could find no time to realize it.

"Then, George, do you know anything at all about the man—the Englishman, it was said—the Englishman too who was a traveller—who died at the hands of these Patagonians,

and was buried by them. Did such a man die?"

"He did."

"And was buried?"

"He was."

"But it wasn't you?"

Here the three exploded into a loud guffaw.

"Do you mind telling me who it was?"

"Yes, I do."

"Shall I ever know?"

"Yes, when the time's come."

"When will that be? I am a little impatient."

"Yes; I see you are. But you must wait."

"Till when?"

"Till I have the opportunity of meeting with this gentleman's brother."

"What! Mr. Frank Grindstone, of the Poplars?"

"Yes."

"Will you let me appoint a meeting with him for you."

"No, thank you; you're very kind. I have written myself."

"Then, George, some other fellow must have worn your coat, and have had those letters in his keeping?"

"Men don't always wear their own clothes, nor do they always have about them documents, that refer to their own business matters."

This was only a truism, but both Mr. Ashton, jun., and his son-in-law, felt that, in the murky light of present events, it was one of no common interest in their eyes. The returned traveller, moreover, had a *brusquerie* of manner about him, that repelled all questioning. His answers were curt and unsatisfactory. He appeared to be wholly and solely intent on the recovery of his alienated property, and, to judge by his sarcastic grins, to

be not a little amused, inwardly, by the commotion, evident in the minds of those, who had been intermediate holders—and, as they conceived—lawful owners of it.

Things cannot fail to look very ugly indeed, when, believing your elder brother to be dead, and buried, you absorb his acres, spend their proceeds on yourself for years, and are awakened at last from your dream of mastership, to find your elder brother before you in good, sound, solid flesh; a man giving fair promise, in spite of his seniority in age, of living to follow your own remains to the grave of your ancestors. And matters get so complicated when, unconsciously, but not the less surely, you get another fellow-creature into the same scrape. But strange complications do happen in this odd world from time to time.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETRIBUTION.

When Mr. George Ashton informed his brother that a meeting had been asked for with Frank, he referred to a note which he had himself addressed to him, in the following terms:—

"—— Street,

"—— Square, W.

"Sir,—

"I am charged with an important communication for you, which I shall be glad to make by word of mouth, at your

earliest convenience. Please name in your reply the time and place of meeting.

"I am,

"Your's obediently,

"GEORGE ASHTON.

"Late from Patagonia.

"Francis Harvey Grindstone, Esq.,

"The Poplars,

"Near Lowchester."

After a little delay, in consequence of Frank's absence from home, when this note arrived at his house, the following reply was posted :—

"Lowborough Hall.

"SIR,—

"I have received a letter from my brother, in which he mentions that he has met with you, and that he knew of your wish for an interview with me. He desires me to say, that, if quite agreeable to you, he will be

happy to see you on Wednesday next, at Lowborough, and to offer you a few days' hospitality. I am staying with him just now, and we can thus talk the matter over, to which you refer, at our leisure, and without interruption.

"I am, sir,

"Your's faithfully,

"FRANCIS HARVEY GRINDSTONE.

"George Ashton, Esq."

Within the past day or two—it is needless to say—Philip had definitely and decidedly abandoned all idea of retaining his hold upon Lowborough. People of sane mind do not usually run full tilt against walls of firmly compacted masonry, in the hope of upsetting them. He had held earnest colloquies, in private, with his father-in-law, on the subject of their common financial discomfiture, through the appearance of Mr. George Ashton; and both had come, unwillingly, to the inevitable

conclusion, that, as the law would certainly decide against them, they had only the alternative of submission: and it was felt by both, that a haughty or reserved submission would be in the highest degree absurd, and possibly prejudicial to their interests in the final issue of events. For, as they argued, it was utterly impossible for them to foresee the course of the said events. At present it seemed improbable that the real owner of Lowborough would marry; and then, strong and hearty as he was in health, so that his life might be prolonged beyond their own, they reflected that it was improbable, under ordinary circumstances, that he would survive their children. And thus it came to pass that Philip was induced to give the hospitable invitation before referred to, which Mr. Ashton amicably accepted.

On his arrival he looked round the estate, under Philip's escort, with unfeigned pleasure,

commented on the great improvements he had effected, and seemed, during his stay, to become more and more amicable every day; appearing, studiously, to avoid all allusion to the fact that it had lately changed hands. To his niece Emily he was roughly affectionate, and won her heart by his kindly notice of her boy; so that, during the earlier days of his sojourn at Lowborough, he spoke and acted as if he had not an interest to the amount of a shilling in the estate. In the evening, he recounted his travels and adventures, to the recital of which they listened with breathless interest. In his intercourse with Frank, he was especially cordial, from the very first day of their mutual acquaintance with each other —cordial to an extent which proved that he had deeply-rooted feelings of respect and reverence for him. So pleasantly, indeed, had the time passed away at Lowborough, that it was only towards the end of his sojourn there, that he placed Frank in possession of the facts

he had promised to communicate to him. The two withdrew one evening into the most sequestered part of the park, and chatted the matter over.

"You will readily imagine, Mr. Grindstone," he began, between the whiffs of his pipe, to which he was an obsequious devotee—"that a man cannot have travelled, as much as I have done, without coming in for his share of peril and adventure. I must have been cut out for such a course through life from the very first, or I couldn't have weathered out its storms as I have done. Somehow we came across each other very much at home: my father couldn't do with me, nor I with him: so that I thought it best to put the herring-pond between us. He died, as it appears, not so very long after my leaving home; perhaps, after all, for lack of my cheerful society, for Harry was always an over-tame, dull sort of dog; and as news had reached home, mind you, before my father's death, that the Pata-

gonians had numbered among their feats of savage, untutored skill, that of killing and burying me, it is not to be wondered at, that Harry should have jumped, with tolerable ease, to the conclusion, that, as I was out of the way altogether, the estate was his. So it would have been, mark you, if it *had* been all over with me; more's the pity for him, poor fellow, that I've turned up: however, he seems to take his lot with tolerable resignation, and your brother too. I'm sorry, at heart, for them both, but it's ridiculous to imagine that a man would be likely to forego such rights as mine. I'm past sixty, and want to rest, and I wouldn't give any sort or kind of security to them, or any body breathing, that I might not go in for matrimony—and, in that case, a little property's always a useful thing to fall back upon. Then, again, old as I am, the idea comes over me sometimes, even now, that I may be off some day to foreign climes again. The president of the Geographical Society

told me the other day that he expected Government would pay me a little attention by-and-bye, in reward for the account of my researches among those fine fellows to the North of Cape Horn; but I won't bother you with their peculiarities now. I am beating about the bush, as it is, instead of coming to the point at once, and telling you what I have to tell you: though it's likely it may be of more interest to your wife than to you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Hasn't she been cheated out of some money within the last few years?"

"Her father's clerk absconded, and she was a loser by it."

"His name was Hardiman? John Hardiman?"

"It was."

"Yes; well, he's been overtaken, poor fellow, by a terrible retribution. It's odd that he and I should have got confused together in the way we have been, so as to

get this property into such a mess. But when news has to travel some thousands of miles, after having been in a mist from the first, and in the charge of fellows who didn't half know the circumstances of the case, and who would be ready enough to resort to invention, where there might be a gap in the evidence—for the sake of making things square with each other, you know—it isn't wonderful that they should get a little twisted and awry before they reach their journey's end."

"Just so; very likely indeed."

"H'm, my pipe's out, I see," interjected the traveller, disconsolately. Frank offered to supply him with the means of remedying the misfortune, by returning to the house for him, but was unsuccessful.

"No, never mind. I'm rather a slave to old habits, but what I have to tell you really has such an interest for me, that I shall soon forget my pipe. Let's see, where was I?"

"You were talking about Hardiman's —"

"Oh, yes, I remember. Well you must know I was one day walking along the coast, watching some of those splendidly-made fellows as they made an inf—, an awful noise, and dodged about after some wild ostriches that abound in those parts, when, as I turned towards the sea, after they had passed me, I noticed a boat, making for shore. An ugly swell was on just then, and though the boat was too far off for me to see the countenances of the men on board her, I felt sure they must be finding enough to do, to steer their course straight for land. As I looked again I noticed a more distant object still. It was low in the water, and yet not on the horizon. I never went out without my telescope, and, on bringing the glass to bear on both these objects, I found out that the one was without doubt a wreck. Part only of the mast—it was a common trading brig—was above water; the rest was evidently fast sinking. I noticed minute objects floating about near her, which I took

for barrels. The men in the boat were—as I thought at first—four; but on looking again I saw there was another man, who seemed to lie in the bottom of the boat, as though incapable of doing anything. The poor fellows who did work, pulled hard, and then appeared to rest, from sheer exhaustion. To have hoisted sail in the gale of wind, that was blowing at the time, would have opened a quick way for them to the mermaids' caves; and, upon my word, I wasn't without my fears that they would be there, before I could get any chance of making their acquaintance. No Insurance Office would have guaranteed their lives an hour in such a heavy sea—in that cockle-shell of a boat.

"It cost them an hour or two's weary pulling, to come within good hail of me, and, so soon as I felt it likely they could hear a voice, I was not slow to send them a hearty English hallo, which, thinking it not unlikely they

were my fellow-countrymen, would, I thought, give them heart, and show them they had a friend on shore. It was towards nightfall—the sun was slowly setting behind one of the many islands, that dot the Western Coast of Patagonia,—when I ran down to a part of the beach, which seemed to me to offer them the best landing-place, and shewed, by waving my hands, and shouting, that I was aware of their troubled condition. As I shouted—I shall never forget it—twelve of those magnificent condors that abound on the precipices of that coast (I have shot one, sir, in those parts, that measured eight and a half feet between the tips of his wings, and about four feet from beak to tail) flew up at once from their roost on a cliff hard by, startled by the noise. They managed to land at last, and I never saw men look more miserable or exhausted, as *living* men, in the whole course of my experience. They were all Englishmen aboard of the ship,

from Melbourne, which first began to come to grief as they rounded Cape Horn. I'm afraid you will grow tired of this long yarn ?"

"By no means, no; I'm listening to every word."

"Well, the poor fellows who had rowed, were spent so much, that I made them lie down at full length on the beach. And I can tell you, they must have found out that their resting place there, was very nearly as good as it would have been, on their own English mattresses at home. I'll tell you why, friend : I know it myself by long experience. It's miserable enough no doubt, lying down on the cold, damp seaweed ; but the beach, just there, is dry, and covered over with very small pebbles, and I assure you, this pebbly bed adapts itself in the most accommodating way, to the curves of the body when you lie down. So that as soon as some of my new friends had been revived a little by sips of my cognac, a flask of which I had about me at the time,

they became quite composed, with the exception of the man of whom *you*, I think, will probably want to know more, than of the others. I had a great deal of trouble with him, poor fellow. I took him, positively, for an escaped lunatic at first. The other four fellows were soon asleep, but it was very evident, from the staring state of his eyeballs, that there was little sleep for him that night. His flesh was dry with fever. He was continually craving for water; and, I noticed, refused, with most strange gestures, as I thought, till he told me his history, all my offers of the brandy. It seemed to do him good to talk, and a good tale is worth listening to in those latitudes; so I half reclined on the beach by his side, and heard him out. I should tell you he had next to no clothing upon him;—I found out afterwards that he had thrown almost all that into the sea. You shall hear under what influence.

"I learned from him that his name was

John Hardiman. I well remember that when the poor fellow told me his name, in an under tone, he looked round him on all sides, as if he dreaded someone else hearing him speak it, besides myself. He asked me if I purposed ever returning to England. When I said yes, he continued, 'Find out for me, for God's sake, a house near Lowchester, in which my old master, Mr. Wilmot, lived. Find out his daughter. My spirit is in an agony, and you will soothe it, if you will solemnly promise me to do what I tell you. I robbed her father, and was the cause of his death. To save myself from detection, and hoping thereby to escape scot-free to some place, where my sin would let me alone, I murdered a fellow-workman;—God knows I did it, though no one else does. I made him drunk, and then pushed him by night into the water, and he died, as I wanted him.' I'm telling you the poor fellow's words now, as nearly as I can remember them. 'Well, then, I got away to

sea, and reached Melbourne. I was hungry to get rich. I was fiercely angry with Providence that I had not got rich. I know something, in a rough way, about Mechanics. I had stolen some capital from my master, and resolved with that—in a sort of fierce temper with Providence, mind you—to make my fortune. Things did prosper with me out there. But I lost my wife and three of the children there. I felt their loss severely, sir, and took to drinking, for I got no comfort from religion. I tell you what, I'd been a chapel-goer for many a year, till I left England, but it seemed to me, from the moment of my setting foot on Australian ground, as though one particular sermon, I had heard years before, haunted me hour by hour. The text was this, "So He gave them their heart's desire, but sent leanness into their soul withal." I grew rich, and became a magistrate. Still I continued to drink. That was my comforter, for I had no God to fly to. I drank—drank

—drank—drank;—I should drink still, bless you, but that I want now to be cool enough to tell you my story. It may help to save my soul. One day I sat on the bench with another magistrate, a great friend of mine; and a more than usually absorbing case was brought before us. It was a murder case. And how do you think the man was murdered? Wait a bit; I'm shivering so, I can't go on.' He paused, and then after a while continued—'A man named—oh! I can't speak it—it was the same surname with that of the man I—I—I murdered, and may have been his brother, or may not, I can't tell. He was charged with three others—who had escaped—with having conspired together, to take the life of a man, who had been more fortunate at the diggings than themselves. They did it treacherously, sir. They lured him to his death. They made him helpless with drink. There was water hard by. And what did they do? And why did they do it

in that way? They dragged him to that water; it was just a little bit of a puddle, and, in his heavy state from drink, they held his head down in it till he died. Oh!—I couldn't hear that trial out. I fled from the court-house, and rushed away to the sea;—rushed along the shore, till I came in with that brig, that now is a wreck. I felt as though devils were chasing me down, into the very sea itself, as they chased down the swine, you know, in the Gospel. They had fastened my own sin on my mind, by bringing that murder case before me, and as I fled, I heard, sir, as plainly as I now hear my own voice, "Be—sure—your—sin—will—find—you—out." I had money with me, and told the fellows on board I would join them for a cruise if they would let me, and they could land me by-and-bye where they were going to. I paid them well, and they treated me very civilly. Well, sir, I drank again on board, till I one day threw my clothes one after the other into the

sea. I had a mad impulse on me to be naked. I remember once I thought I was pursued about the deck of the ship by two—two lost spirits, but they were only two Fuegians;—you know, sir, what hideous-looking creatures they are, with their bars of red and white paint across their faces. They ran after me as the others did, to save me from throwing myself overboard. They sank in the storm out there, and I—I, with the brand of Cain upon me—thought my hour was come. I sank once; and—oh! I was aware in that moment that that horrible, horrible water murder of mine came fully back before me, and I thought the hour of Vengeance was come. But no; I am here yet. Is it possible there is mercy for me? Those men asleep on the sand rescued me—perhaps they thought they should make money out of me for it—and I am yet to die. And I feel death is not far off now. But find out Marion Wilmot, and tell her there is money for her in

the Melbourne bank. Write to my son John —John Hardiman, —— Street, Melbourne— and tell him to pay it all back to her, with rich interest. He's a good lad. He knows that I am a thief—but *not* that I'm a murderer. Oh! it has been killing me by a lingering death, that I dared not tell them what I have done. But when they wake, don't tell those men who I am. Let them think they have saved anyone but John Hardiman.'

"This was the tenour of his talk," continued Mr. Ashton, "till, at last, after some hours of wakefulness, exhaustion overtook him, and he slept. He awoke from his sleep refreshed, and I had some hope of his eventual recovery. The other four seamen left us, in about a week after their landing, to join one of the frequent sealing expeditions that are undertaken off the Patagonian coast. It happened a day or two after that, that we had to shift our quarters from those parts, in order to avoid being in the middle of a war

between two hostile tribes—a quarrel in which we did not care to interfere. I should tell you that, previously to this, I had furnished Hardiman with both under and upper clothing, out of such stores as I had by me. I have now to explain how it came to pass that he was mistaken for myself. The matter is simple enough when looked into. I have told you that we had to shift our quarters. We moved, gradually, fifty or sixty miles up the country, and at last halted on the coast again —halted just in time to have prevented another relapse into illness on the part of my new companion, through the fatigues he had undergone in the journey. The country just there appeared to be quite uninhabited. I suppose the reason must have been the stony nature of the plains. I found the spirit of exploration strong upon me just then, and was anxious to pierce farther north yet, among some mountains and valleys which were a *terra incognita* to me. Foreseeing nothing

that was likely to prevent my speedy return —for a man hale and hearty as I am is not apt to anticipate sickness—I left our acquaintance with his share of provisions, promising to be with him again in ten or twelve hours at most. I had been travelling six hours among scenes entirely new to me, and in my enjoyment of them did not notice the approach of a thunderstorm. I was on a damp, peaty plain at the time, crossing it to reach an eminence I discovered at the distance of six or seven miles away from me, when the storm seemed to descend on me all at once in its full fury. One shudders to think of such hairbreadth escapes, as was the one I then met with. For the only time in my life I was struck by the electric fluid, and must have been senseless for some considerable time. I fell on this peaty soil, and was soaked to the skin, by the deluge of rain and hail, that was pouring upon me at the time. If God had not sent me help through the

hands of some wayfaring Indians, I must have perished. I am amazed to think how I could possibly have weathered out that fearful fever. But even in those desolate regions I was cared for, and recovered. I had been nearly two months away, when I returned to seek Hardiman. I found only his grave. He had evidently fallen into his old habits again, and in the madness of intoxication had made himself bitter enemies among people who will do you no harm unless provoked. There were several of the natives in the old spot, when I once more reached it, and I learned from their gestures, and words, that he had offended them and fallen. I learned, too, that soon afterwards a boat from some sealing vessel near had put into a little creek close by. The natives thought that those in her might be fellow countrymen of the murdered man, and to them they committed those clothes, and contrived to make known the tale which reached England, and seems to

have possessed everybody with the notion that I was the man who had been fallen upon and buried. This is the history I had to tell you. I have *not* written to Hardiman's son; but you, doubtless, will do so. The poor fellow's history has struck me often since, as being a most impressive one. But did not his sin find him out?"

Frank made no comment in reply but this—"It was that accursed hunger for gold that killed him, for time—not, let us hope, for eternity."

CHAPTER XIV.

UNCLE GEORGE'S LARGE-HEARTEDNESS.

A DAY or two after the traveller's story given in the last chapter, he signified his intention of withdrawing from Lowborough, taking everyone by surprise as he did so. Philip had been gradually preparing himself for removal to other scenes, scarcely so agreeable to his tastes, as those so familiar to him at Lowborough. His heart, indeed, seemed to die down within him, as he contemplated the

threatened change in his fortunes. How terrible to him was the consciousness of his approaching humiliation in the eyes of his prouder neighbours! Horses and carriages, furniture and plate, all must be sold; thousands of pounds withdrawn from his banker's, and his estate surrendered; and then he might hope for the sad privilege of retiring, with the wreck of his fortune, to some poor home in London, whence he must issue every day to work the work of a drudge in that city of hard labour, and precarious remuneration. This was the prospect, at least, that darkly haunted him. But he was soon convinced that he need not fall quite so low in the social scale. For Frank had found him one day roaming through the park by himself in a disconsolate mood, had got him to talk quietly about his prospects, and then had soothed and allayed his fears.

"Be a man, Philip," he had said to him, "for the sake of your wife and child. You

must know little enough of me to suppose that I would allow you to sink to the level of a common city drudge at the desk. Things are terribly changed for you, indeed! I don't deny that. Has Mr. Ashton entered at all on the subject of his intentions with regard to the property?"

"Not a word has crossed his lips. It's odd, isn't it?" replied Philip, diverted just then from his troubles by Mr. Ashton's strange silence or reserve on the subject of his possessions.

Frank paused, for a few minutes, in a fit of thoughtfulness, before he replied, and then asked in a low, confidential tone of voice—

"Can you tell me, Philip, who spoke to Mr. Ashton about my own affairs?"

"What do you mean?"

"Who told him about the disposal of my property?"

"My dear Frank, have I done any harm? I told him myself?"

"You've done no harm; but it was no matter of his, you know."

"Exactly; but he seemed to take to you so much, and I'm willing to allow, myself, though we've had our tiffs, that you're about the noblest fellow I ever met with, though you're my brother. I should say you know far better what peace of mind is than I do."

Frank affected not to see the point of his brother's remark.

"I hope, my dear fellow, your affairs may take a turn for the better," he replied. "One mustn't lose one's peace of mind, over a cloudy morning. One doesn't know, but that it may turn out to be a glorious afternoon and evening."

Philip groaned. "H'm; well, I wish I could see it in the same light with you," he answered, "but I can't; it's a blow to all my aims, and hopes, and anticipations, that I didn't expect. And, then, there's poor Emily—"

"But she has not reproached you; I mean, it has made no difference to her?"

"Not in the way you would infer. No."

"I thought not. She clings to you more closely?"

"She does; but think how she must suffer!"

"She is a true woman, Philip. Courage, old man! She'll help to bear you up under it all."

"I feel she is an unspeakable comfort to me. She had her fancies once, but——"

"Oh! they are things of the past now, you know. Never think again of them."

"What must I do, Frank, in this property-matter? I must screw up my courage to say something to Mr. Ashton about it. Suspense, under such circumstances, is simply a horrible torture!"

"He talks of leaving Lowborough, you see?"

"Yes; but isn't it odd he has never spoken to me?"

"It is; but he may do so yet. Or he may write to you."

"But I want it all off my mind. It isn't kind in him to keep me in this suspense."

"Can I mediate in the matter, in any way?"

"You might tell him I want to come to some understanding with him. That would do no harm."

"I'll run in, and see him, now. Here's Marion coming. Stroll out with her a little while, and I'll join you both by-and-bye."

In a few minutes Marion came up, and, with the love and confidence of a sister, put her little hand within Philip's arm, almost as she would have done in older days, if only he had spoken to her of his love.

"You look very dull and poorly, Philip," she said, with a sister's tenderness. "You are fretting very much."

"My dear Marion, how can it be helped?" he replied, looking earnestly into her face.

"It will be such a change for Emily. Has she said anything to you about it?"

"Nothing that ought, in the least degree, to affect your peace of mind. She has had, this morning, a long conversation with her uncle. I happened to enter the room in which they were, for a moment, but they were talking so confidentially that I didn't like to interrupt them, and so left."

"Indeed! Then I wonder Emily hasn't said anything to me about it. She would have done it, if she had had any good news to report."

Marion thought a moment, and then replied, "I looked at her, when I went into the room—indeed, I saw both their faces—and I thought they appeared, you know, to be quite happy and comfortable together."

"Did you?"

"Yes; and, do you know, I think you really should take courage. Things may not turn out to be so bad as they look."

"What shall you do about that money Hardiman spoke of?"

"Oh! if it comes, I shall find a good use for it. I have already told my husband what I should like to do with it."

"Do you mind telling me?"

"Not at all. I wish to sink it in some way or other, so as to give a few more comforts to poor Mrs. Nichols. She has an expensive family, you know."

"That's very noble of you, Marion."

"Not at all, Philip. It's a selfish pleasure to me that I am at all able to help Frank in his good works."

"Isn't he a glorious fellow, Marion?"

The wife's eyes kindled, and then filled with tears. She spoke not one single word in reply, but, as Philip saw her proud, glad emotion, he knew that God, in His providence, had very greatly blessed her, in her marriage.

Then they walked about, and looked at the

flowers, and the swans. Marion's thoughts appeared to be altogether occupied with the garden-delights, but Philip's eyes wandered uneasily, from time to time, towards the house.

After a while, Frank emerged from it, and asked Philip to go up to the house. Mr. Ashton, he said, was luxuriating with his "Times," and didn't, just then, care about a walk.

Philip obeyed with a beating heart, and left his brother and Marion together.

The old gentleman was in half-reclining posture on the library sofa, looking exceedingly happy and comfortable, in a quiet way.

"Well, Philip," he said, looking up, as his niece's husband entered, "You want to have something settled, I understand. Come and sit here."

Philip drew a chair close to him.

"I dare say I very much alarmed you

by what I said to your brother? He would tell you that I hinted at the possibility of marrying, and settling down myself?"

"Yes; and he said he thought you might, possibly, be induced to undertake some more explorations."

"So I did; but I shall do neither. I've made up my mind fully since, what to do; and, of course, I ought to keep you no longer in suspense about it."

"You intend to remain in England?"

"Yes."

"At Lowborough?"

"Yes; if you should be as amiably-disposed towards me, as my niece is."

"Then, of course, you will wish us to quit it?"

"That's the very thing I don't wish you to do."

Philip looked surprised, and his countenance wore a more hopeful aspect, than when he first entered the room. But he sat in

silence, awaiting the further development of Mr. Ashton's plans for the future.

"Well, you know, I've fallen into very comfortable quarters here, and I don't mean to give them up without a struggle."

"Struggle! I don't understand you."

"I dare say not; but you'll see what I mean by-and-bye. I'm tired of my roving propensities, you know, for one thing. I mean to settle down *somewhere*, and why not here as well as anywhere else?"

Philip looked puzzled at this question, but remained silent.

Mr. Ashton evidently put another construction on this silence.

"Yes, I see," he said, meditatively; "I shall be intruding on Emily and yourself."

"How so?"

"By doing what I want to do. I have been having a long chat with Emily about matters, and now you and I may as well have it out with each other. We shall the sooner

come to a settlement thereby. I want to settle here, though I did talk about going, on account of the great improvements you've effected on the estate, and I *don't* want to spend the rest of my life alone. After having had so much to do with savages for so many years, I should like to settle down among civilized beings at last. I find in Emily, and yourself, two favourable specimens of the civilized being, and your introduction of me to your brother Frank and his wife, who, I wish, could remain with us six months out of the twelve, I thank you very much for. I've been thinking matters over, as Emily would tell you."

"No; not a word has she said to me about it yet?"

"H'm. Then she's afraid you may not care to fall in with my proposed arrangements. Well, you know, the estate's mine; there's no denying that. It's mine till I die, and then, if Emily survives me, it is hers, in

trust for that little rascal of yours, who broke my rest for me last night. He doesn't deserve it; but I'll forgive him, and reward evil with good. I propose to reserve to myself fifteen hundred a year out of the five thousand Lowborough is worth; and out of that, if you will fall in with my plans, to pay you five hundred a year towards the housekeeping, on condition that you let me have rooms of my own, under the same roof with you."

"But the rental is entirely your own, and there are even accumulations of it that you can claim."

"I know it; but I don't want to claim these things. I'm an old man now, and am not likely to want so much money. I shall take from the estate a clear thousand a year, just for pocket-money, and to help others with. For the rest, as, if I took the whole rental, the large savings I should accumulate out of it would come to you at last, I think it

is just as well, and possibly quite as convenient to yourself, that you should have the benefit of them during my lifetime. You see what I mean? You will lose a thousand a year through my turning up in this unexpected way, till I die; and then you will have it back again. That will be better than making a great stir about it, won't it?"

"Better *for us*, a thousand times over, but *you* will lose by it."

"Not at all. What would be the good to me of so much money? It would only have to lie and accumulate. No, when a man draws near the verge of threescore and ten it's a pity if he hasn't something else, besides money, to think about."

"My brother Frank has been winning you over to this *very* lenient course of settlement?"

"I won't deny that he has done a very great deal towards it. I venerate a man like that, who does not fall down and worship the

golden image, which is set up in this great Babylon of a world. Frank is my ideal of a hero, and in my humble way I wish to be like him. Therefore, as it is my own, I reserve the odd thousand a year. A man ought to find himself in tobacco with that, and have something to give away besides. But are you quite agreeable?"

"You take from me all power of choice, and make me your grateful debtor for life besides."

"That means to say, though in round-about phrase, that we understand each other?"

"Perfectly. I acquiesce in it, in every way."

"Then give me your hand upon it, and it's done just as firmly as if we were bound to stand to these conditions towards each other, in black and white. But stop; if we had it down in black and white, we should have to pay the lawyer for it. Now, suppose we pay

a twenty pound note between us to somebody who would be the better for it? Do you know of anyone?"

"Yes," replied Philip. "There's poor old Rachel Skinner, my uncle's old servant. She's in Frank's 'Widows' Home,' it's true, and isn't likely to want it on that account."

"Then I don't see the use of giving it to her, do you? Suppose we give it to the Patagonians?"

"I don't quite understand you. In clothes, I suppose you mean?"

"In Bibles. Christianity before civilization, for me, all the world over! You can't have the flower, you know, without the root."

Philip is still minus that thousand a year; but, in the way of inverse ratio, his happiness has considerably increased. He and Emily have sons and daughters, all of whom are fond of gathering round Uncle George's knee —the seat of honour directly upon it being reserved for the youngest. And Philip's

advance, towards Christian liberality, has been increased, since the said diminution in his income began. He is more thoughtful for the wants of others. There is less in him of "the pride of life." After having had his heart drawn out to give liberally of his substance, in a good cause, he does not meet a poorer brother, on his own level, or on a yet higher one in the social scale, with a stiff neck, and a cold greeting. There is not, in his composition a trace of that pseudo-Christian hauteur, that might well be classed in the same category of moral qualities, with the loud-speaking, and the self-vaunting zeal of Jehu, the son of Nimshi. His love for Frank increases every year. Emily and he are upon terms of cordial friendship with the inmates of Wimperley Grange. Mr. Pitman and Priscilla are quitting the rectory, for a living, which has been offered to the former, by the Lord Chancellor, and duly accepted.

There are children, too, at the Poplars,

where Frank and Marion are still living. Frank has a sprinkling of gray hairs upon his head, and Marion has developed into a beautiful matron, with a comely figure, but a face, notwithstanding, decidedly *spirituelle*. The "Widows' Home," under the care of Mrs. Nichols, is prospering greatly, and she is much helped, in the management of it, by her second son, who, not having done so well, in the Oxford Class List, as his elder brother, is nevertheless a fine fellow, and promises to be useful in his day, and generation, as curate of St. Mark's, and chaplain of "the Home."

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